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EARLY METHODISTS
UNDER PERSECUTION

JOSIAH · HENRY · BARR



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BY
JOSIAH HENRY BARR
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JOSIAH HENRY BARR

TO MY WIFE, BERTHA MAXSON BARR, M.A.,
WHO HAS BEEN A CONSTANT INSPIRATION, AND WHO HAS
RENDERED ME MUCH ASSISTANCE IN PRODUCING THE WORK,
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED.

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PREFACE

THIS work was undertaken for the purpose of ascertaining, so far as possible, the actual extent of the suffering of the early Methodists, and of their struggle against persecution. It deals only with events in the British Isles and covers the life of the Rev. John Wesley. There was persecution after his death, but by that time the crisis had passed and Methodism had become so thoroughly established that there was no longer any possibility of crushing it. Therefore what followed, though extremely trying, was more incidental.

At the beginning of the task the hope was entertained of making this a source book of facts, but the abundance of material soon made this plan impracticable. Were all the material to be used which is at hand, it would make a volume of twice this size. Therefore this does not purport to be a complete account. For the sake of brevity some material has been omitted entirely, and wherever possible, nearly all has been abridged. In some instances narratives have been broken for this purpose. However, it is believed that enough is given, both to show the extent of the sufferings of the Methodists, and to portray the spirit of their persecutors.

In the search for material nothing has been found anywhere that would suggest an outline for the work, or that would direct the student to the sources. It seems to be almost entirely an unexplored field. It has been necessary, therefore, to handle volume after volume wherever material seemed likely to be found. Between two and three thousand volumes have thus been reviewed. Also such English periodicals as refer to the subject and could be found have been consulted. Of the three collections of pamphlets relating to the early Methodists, and found in this country, all have been carefully examined.

Secondary sources have been used sparingly, as in almost

all instances the primary sources from which these writers took the facts were readily found. The chief exception to this is the scholarly work of L. Tyerman, whose writings to some extent have been a guide to certain sources and have furnished some excellent material.

The work was suggested by Professor James T. Shotwell, of Columbia University, in connection with regular university work. Moreover, I am indebted to him for his sympathetic interest and encouragement; for suggestions in regard to the arrangement of the work, and for helpful criticism of the manuscript. President Charles J. Little, of Garrett Biblical Institute, gave me some helpful suggestions, both as to the nature of the work and in the search for sources. Had he lived, doubtless with his wide knowledge of Methodist Church history he would have been a valued adviser, but his death occurred shortly after the work was begun.

I am especially indebted to Professor John Alfred Faulkner, of Drew Theological Seminary, whose great scholarship has been a constant inspiration, and who has been a counselor throughout the entire construction of the book. I had the privilege of consulting him freely and frequently, and always found him interested, sympathetic, and helpful.

I recall with pleasure the courtesies shown me while in search for material. I found the librarian of Columbia University always glad to render any possible assistance. I am also obliged to the libraries of Union Theological Seminary, the General Theological Seminary, Wesleyan University, and especially Drew Theological Seminary. At all times at Drew I had free access to its shelves, and to its rare and valuable collections. Were it not for the books, pamphlets, and periodicals relating to early Methodist history in this great library this book could not have been written.

JOSIAH HENRY BARR.

CHAPTER I

THE COST OF A NEW CAUSE

AT the University of Oxford in 1730 a group of young men met together in order to help each the other in their religious attainments. They studied the Scriptures, discussed religious books, preached to the prisoners, and tried to conform their lives to Bible standards. These young men speedily became the objects of ridicule in the college, and consequently were dubbed "enthusiasts," "Methodists," "the holy club," etc. They met only with opposition, which continued till the group left the university, and carried with them these opprobrious names into fields of greater activity, where feeling became so intensified as shortly to culminate in open violence.

In 1739 Wesley speaks of preaching "the plain old religion of the Church of England, which is now almost 'everywhere spoken against' under the name of Methodist."¹ "Not only all manner of evil was spoken of us both in private and public, but the beasts of the people were stirred up almost in all places to knock these mad dogs on the head at once."² This seed of evil very shortly produced a rich harvest of brutality. Those who chose to join themselves with the hated Methodists were likely to meet bitter opposition, if not violence, from their own people. At Islington, Wesley found need of "encouraging Miss Crisp, who was being persecuted by her relatives."³ A young man by the name of Joseph Periam was put into an insane asylum for being "Methodistically mad." He was conscious of no bodily illness, so refused their remedies, whereupon he was thrown

¹John Wesley, *Journal*, September 16, 1739; October 15, 1739.

²Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 236.

³John Wesley, *Journal*, March 11, 1739.

upon a bed, a key thrust into his mouth, and medicine forced down him. His father visited him and suggested that he give up religion. He refused, and the father left him in the asylum. At Mr. Periam's request Whitefield called upon him, and, finding him in perfect bodily health, he, together with Mr. Seward, succeeded in securing his release, but upon condition that he accompany Whitefield to Georgia.⁴ At Hertford Whitefield found some who were violently opposed and persecuted by those of their own household because of this "madness."⁵ Charles Wesley says that "wives and children are beaten and turned out of doors and the persecutors are the complainers. . . . To-day Mary Hanney was with us. While she continued a drunkard, a swearer, and company-keeper it was very well; she and her father agreed entirely. But from the time of her turning to God he has used her most inhumanly. Yesterday he beat her, and drove her out of doors, following her with imprecations and threatenings to murder her, if she returned."⁶ One Mrs. G—— was put in Bedlam, an insane asylum, by her husband. She escaped, but returned, and was chained down and treated in the usual manner of the asylum. Her crime was "Methodism."⁷ Mr. John Bosworth wrote to Wesley saying that his friends and nearest relatives had done their utmost to separate him from God and his children, meaning the Methodists; but, failing in this, they seemed resolved upon separating him from themselves. His uncle saw that none could take care of his business as well as Bosworth, but he could not bear a Methodist in his house.⁸ Near Newgate Charles Wesley met a mother who was abused and persecuted by her own daughters, who did not

⁴George Whitefield, Journal, May 19, 1739.

⁵Ibid., June 20, 1739.

⁶Charles Wesley, Journal, September 28, 1739.

⁷John Wesley, Journal, August 23, 1740.

NOTE—George Whitefield's son was "born in a room which the master of the house had prepared, on a previous occasion, as a prison for his wife" for going to hear the great Methodist preacher. (George Whitefield, Journal, February 9, 1744.)

⁸John Wesley, Journal, February 22, 1746.

refrain even from blows.⁹ John Wesley asks what kind of creatures are those gentlemen and their wives, who would “use the most scurrilous language, strike and drive out of their house on a rainy night a young gentlewoman, a stranger far from home, for ‘joining with the Methodists.’”¹⁰

Persecution took the form of refusing employment to these people. A gardener, who had been in the employ of a nobleman for above fifty years, was discharged for “hearing the Methodists.”¹¹ At Charlton all the farmers entered into a joint agreement “to turn all out of their service, and give no work to any who went to hear a Methodist preacher.” This plan, however, fell to the ground by the conversion of some of the parties to the agreement.¹² At North-Moulton a gentleman threatened much, and turned many out of their work and farms.¹³ At Hornby the landlord turned all the Methodists out of their houses.¹⁴ They then built some little houses of their own. Also keelmen were cruelly treated by their master.¹⁵

The overseers of the poor conceived another means of preventing some of the people from hearing these preachers. The ministers of Bramble, Segery, Lingley, and many others forbade the churchwardens and overseers to let these who heard the Methodist preacher have any allowance from the poor funds of their parishes, notwithstanding some of them were very poor and had large families to support.¹⁶

The opposition also tried to use the courts as a means of checking the spread of this “enthusiasm.” In 1740 “several men made a great disturbance, during the evening sermon here,” [probably London], “behaving rudely to the women, and striking

⁹Charles Wesley, *Journal*, February 27, 1748.

¹⁰John Wesley, *Journal*, December 19, 1768.

¹¹*Ibid.*, March 31, 1753.

¹²*Ibid.*, September 9, 1754.

¹³*Ibid.*, September 19, 1755.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, July 7, 1757.

¹⁵Charles Wesley, *Journal*, November 15, 1744.

¹⁶George Whitefield's Works, Letter to Bishop of Sarum, November 30, 1742.

the men, who spake not to them." A constable standing by pulled out his staff and commanded them to keep the peace. Upon this one of them swore he would be avenged, and, going immediately to a justice, made oath that the constable had picked his pocket. The constable was, accordingly, bound over to the next sessions. Here not only the same man, but two of his companions swore to the charge. But there being eighteen or twenty witnesses on the other side, the jury easily saw through the whole proceeding, and without going out at all, or any demur, brought in the prisoner "Not guilty."¹⁷ The Methodist place of worship at the Foundry in London was presented as a "seditious assembly." But the presentment was quashed.¹⁸ The Gentleman's Magazine relates the following account of a presentment in Wales: "Brecon, August 28th, 1744. We, the Grand Jury, of the county of Brecon, etc., having received in charge amongst other learned and laudable observations made by our honorable judge of this circuit that we ought to present [as criminal] every obstruction to our holy religion, as being the most valuable part of our constitution, and it being too well known that there are several, as we are advised, illegal field and other meetings of persons styled Methodists, whose preachers pretend to expound the Holy Scriptures by virtue of inspiration, by which means they collect together great numbers of disorderly persons, very much endangering the peace of our sovereign Lord, the King, which proceedings, unless timely suppressed, may endanger the peace of the kingdom in general, and, at all adventures, the pretended preachers or teachers, at their irregular meetings, by their enthusiastic doctrines, do very much confound and disorder the minds of great numbers of his Majesty's good subjects, which in time may prove of dangerous tendency, even to the confusion of our established religion, and, consequently, the overthrowing of our good government, both in church and state; and that we may be as particular as we can in detecting this villainous scheme,) we present the houses following, viz.:

¹⁷John Wesley, Journal, September 4, 1740.

¹⁸Ibid., May 31, 1740.

Pontiwal, in the parish of Broynllys, being the house of John Watkins, and the house of Howell Harris, in Trevecka, in the parish of Talgarth, both in this county, as places entertaining and encouraging such dangerous assemblies; and humbly desire our honorable judge, if the authority of this court is not sufficient to suppress the said disorders, that he will be pleased to apply for that end and purpose to some superior authority whereby our religion and the peace of the nation in general, and this country in particular, may be preserved upon our ancient and laudable establishment.”¹⁹ This, however, is the only presentment of this nature that is known.

At Frome, during a relentless and shameful persecution in 1751, Mrs. Seagram, a widow with two children, was fined twenty pounds for permitting preaching in her house, which had been licensed by dissenters. This woman supported herself and her two infants by selling drugs. When she could not pay her fine her household goods and stock of drugs, worth fifty or sixty pounds, were seized and sold, which left her and her children penniless in the world.²⁰

While the Methodists, particularly Howell Harris and his associates, were very successful in South Wales, “they suffered in North Wales cruel persecution and oppression. The poorest sort of people, who showed a readiness to receive the Gospel, had to pay fines to the amount of eighty pounds. Some were totally ruined, being robbed of all their scanty means of subsistence; and even the pillow under the head of the child in its cradle was taken by their cruel persecutors.”²¹

“In the year 1747 the brethren of South Wales exerted themselves to make collections to assist their poor brethren who had been thus robbed in North Wales, and to defray the expenses of a lawsuit which they had instituted in defense of the gospel.”²²

¹⁹Gentleman's Magazine, September, 1744, p. 504.

²⁰Stephen Tuck, Wesleyan Methodism in Frome, pp. 21ff.

²¹Association of Aberystwyth and Bala, History of Calvinistic Methodism, p. 9.

²²Ibid.

The writer adds in a footnote: "Inasmuch as descendants of the ringleader of these persecutions are now not only kindly disposed, but also liberal and helpful to the cause of the gospel, we refrain from enlarging upon this subject."²³

At Hatfield a justice levied a fine on a local preacher on the pretense that he was holding a conventicle; so also did a justice in Kent three or four years previously. These punishments were not sustained, however, by the higher courts.²⁴ Again, in 1786, an account is given of a "body of the people called Methodist" being fined twenty-one pounds "under the sanction of an obsolete law respecting conventicles." The correspondent expresses his belief that the "sufferers will find sure protection and ample redress in the verdict of their peers."²⁵

Shortly before Wesley's death other and "vigorous attempts were made in different parts of the kingdom to prosecute the Methodists under the Conventicle Act. Several preachers were fined twenty pounds for preaching in unlicensed places, and even in the open air."²⁶ Some laymen were fined five shillings for attending the preaching.²⁷ This attempt also gained but slight success. However, it greatly distressed Wesley. He wrote a very earnest appeal to several of the bishops, in one of which he said that now he was an old man, nearer ninety than eighty years of age, consequently had nothing to ask or to fear for himself from any living man, but he earnestly pleaded that justice be done the people called Methodists.²⁸ In stating the case to a friend, who was a member of Parliament, probably Wilberforce, Wesley

²³Association of Aberystwyth and Bala, History of Calvinistic Methodism, p. 9.

²⁴John Wesley, Journal, July 17, 1772.

²⁵Monthly Chronicle, 1786, p. 569.

²⁶NOTE—The relative purchasing power of money makes this sum much larger than it seems. For example, in order to prevent losing a preaching house, in 1776 Wesley notes, "I bought an estate consisting of two houses, a yard, a garden with three acres of good land" for sixteen pounds, ten shillings, to be paid, part now, part Michaelmas, and the balance in May.

²⁷Methodist Manual by J. Crowther, p. 12, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. ccxlii.

²⁸John Wesley, Works, Letter to Bishop of —, June 26, 1790.

observes: "Last month a few people met together in Lincolnshire to pray and to praise God in a friend's house; there was no preaching at all. Two neighboring justices fined the man of the house twenty pounds. I suppose he was not worth twenty shillings. Upon this his household goods were distrained, and sold to pay the fine. He applied to the Quarter-Sessions, but all the justices averred, 'The Methodists could have no relief from the Act of Toleration because they went to church: and that, so long as they did so, the Conventicle Act should be executed against them.'²⁹ Last Sunday, when one of our preachers was beginning to speak to a quiet congregation, a neighboring justice sent a constable to seize him, though he was licensed; and would not release him till he had paid twenty pounds, telling him his license was good for nothing because he was a churchman.³⁰ Now, sir, what can the Methodists do? They are liable to be ruined by the Conventicle Act, and they have no relief from the Act of Toleration! If this is not oppression, what is? Where, then, is English liberty! . . . If you will speak to Mr. Pitt on that head you will oblige,"³¹ etc. Like other attempts of this kind by the justices to harass the Methodists, this also proved a failure, for the oppressed were again sustained by the higher courts, and the fines were remitted.³²

²⁹John Wesley, Journal, June 26, 1790, or Works, Letter to a Member of Parliament, June 26, 1790.

NOTE—The Conventicle Act was passed in 1664, and renewed in 1670. It was aimed at all kinds of dissenters. Practically all religious assemblies were forbidden, except those of the Established Church.

The Act of Toleration was passed in 1689, and tolerated freedom of worship by *dissenters*, except Catholics. Technically, a Protestant must *dissent* in order to receive its benefits. For the text of these Acts see Gee and Hardy, Documents Illustrative of English Church History, pp. 623 and 655.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Methodist Manual by J. Crowther, p. 12, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. cxxlii.

CHAPTER II

JOHN WESLEY

THE Rev. John Wesley embodied in himself the great evangelical movement of the eighteenth century.¹ At Oxford he was the leader of the Methodists, and when the revival began to spread throughout the nation his was the skillful hand that organized and directed it. As a hymn writer he was second to his brother Charles, and as a great preacher he stood next to Whitefield, but he surpassed them all as a scholar, as a controversialist, and as an organizer of men. He possessed so remarkable a calmness of temper that during his long life there is scarcely an intimation, either by opponent or friend, of ruffled feelings. With it all he possessed an undaunted courage. He feared no opposition, of whatever type or however fierce. He early formed the practice of meeting the mobs face to face, and of looking them straight in the eye. Hostile publications, if decent, were answered by him so far as time would permit. By this means more than once he conquered opposition, and turned enemies into friends. Though he was as unbending as steel in what he believed to be duty, yet all accounts agree in representing him as gentle and kind. He had a mighty conviction, and with it a most astonishing energy. These did not desert him during his entire life. The conviction together with his energy compelled him to his wonderful achievements, which caused Southey to wonder at the man,² and Lecky to pronounce him "one of the most powerful and most active intellects in England."³

But withal he was naturally a conservative. At Oxford it was Mr. Morgan that led the way to visiting the prisons and

¹Green, *History of the English People*, vol. iv, p. 147.

²R. Southey, *Life of John Wesley*.

³Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii, p. 607.

preaching to the inmates. Later, when excluded from the churches, it was Whitefield that inaugurated field preaching. He was hurrying home to silence a layman who had begun to preach and his mother told him to be careful what he did with that young man, for she said, "He is as much called of God to preach as you are."⁴ When once convinced, he adopted all these practices, and used them with tremendous effect. He, himself, became the most energetic of field preachers; he visited prisons everywhere, and used all the effective lay preachers that were available. Indeed, without these departures the movement could never have developed into a great revival.

All his doctrines were those which he firmly believed were taught by the Church of England.⁵ If he reinterpreted and revived some of them, he thought that he found even this in the articles or homilies of the Established Church. He looked everywhere for what seemed to him to be useful and practical, and when once adopted by him it was transformed into a living, energizing force. If he believed it, others were obliged to do so because of his compelling personality. This is the type of man whom persecution vainly attempted to check.

One of his first encounters was with the celebrated Beau Nash, of Bath. This noted society leader and gambler expressed his intention to put to confusion the Methodist preacher. Wesley was in the midst of his sermon "when their champion appeared, and, coming close to me, asked, 'By what authority I did these things?' I replied by the authority of Jesus Christ conveyed to me by the (now) Archbishop of Canterbury, when he laid his hands upon me and said, 'Take thou authority to preach the gospel.' He said: 'This is contrary to Act of Parliament. This is a Conventicle.' I answered: 'Sir, the Conventicle mentioned in that Act (as the preamble shows) are seditious meetings. But this is not such. Here is no shadow of sedition. Therefore it is not contrary to that Act.' He replied: 'I say it is. And, besides,

⁴Moore, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 414.

⁵John Wesley, *Works*, *Farther Appeal*, part i, sec. 3ff and 24ff, etc.

your preaching frightens people out of their wits.' 'Sir, did you ever hear me preach?' 'No.' 'How, then, can you judge of what you never heard?' 'Sir, by common report.' 'Common report is enough. Give me leave to ask, sir, is not your name Nash?' 'My name is Nash.' 'Sir, I dare not judge of you by common report. I think it is not enough to judge by.' Here he paused a while, and, having recovered himself, asked, 'I desire to know what this people come here for?' On which one replied: 'Sir, leave him to me. Let an old woman answer him.' 'You, Mr. Nash, take care of your body. We take care of our souls, and for the food of our souls we come here.' He replied not a word, but walked away."⁶

From this time on for fifty years while he was preaching there were many and rude disturbances. These not infrequently broke out into violence. Many times mobs were organized, which he was compelled to face, and sometimes these attacked him with the determination to take his life. That he escaped with so few injuries seems indeed marvelous.

At Upton, in 1740, while he was preaching, the rabble rang the bells and made all the noise they could.⁷ At Deptford "many poor wretches were got together, utterly void both of common sense and common decency. They cried aloud as if just come from among the tombs."⁸ Six days later, at the same place, he says, "Before I began to preach many men of the baser sort, having mixed themselves with the women, behaved so indecently as occasioned much disturbance."⁹ At Chelsea the congregation could not see Wesley "nor one another at a few yards distance by reason of the exceeding thick smoke, which was occasioned by the wild fire and things of that kind continually thrown into the room."¹⁰ However, he continued his discourse.

At London he was frequently disturbed. He says: "A

⁶John Wesley, *Journal*, June 5, 1739.

⁷*Ibid.*, May 13, 1740.

⁸*Ibid.*, February 4, 1741.

⁹*Ibid.*, February 10, 1741.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, January 26, 1742.

great number of men, having got into the middle of the place, began to speak big, swelling words, so that my voice could hardly be heard.”¹¹ “The many-headed beast began to roar again.”¹² “On Saturday while I was preaching a rude rout lifted up their voice on high.”¹³ In the above instances he turned upon his disturbers and quieted them. Frequently he was thus successful. He says, “We greatly rejoiced in the Lord at Long-Lane, even in the midst of those that contradicted and blasphemed.”¹⁴

Sometimes this opposition followed him to his lodgings, or disturbed him there. As he went out from Spitalfields, he says, “a pretty large mob attended me to the door of the house to which I was going. But they did us no hurt, only gaped, and stared and hallooed as loud as they could.”¹⁵ When an old man, stopping in a suburb of London, a gun was fired at his chamber window at night, and at the same time a large stone was thrown through it. He says it was done “probably in sport by some that had been drinking. I presently went to sleep again.”¹⁶

Novel means were tried to break up his congregations. While preaching at Charles Square, London, “a great shout began. Many of the rabble had brought an ox, which they were vehemently laboring to drive in among the people. But their labor was in vain.”¹⁷ At Pensford “a great company of the rabble, hired (as we afterward found) for the purpose, came furiously upon us, bringing a bull, which they had been baiting, and now strove to drive in among the people.” But the animal ran either to the one side or the other, while the Methodists “quietly sang praise to God, and prayed for about an hour.” “The poor wretches, finding themselves disappointed, at length seized upon the bull, now weak and tired, after having been too long torn and beaten both by dogs and man, and by main

¹¹John Wesley, Journal, September 18, 1740.

¹²Ibid., October 26, 1740.

¹³Ibid., January 4, 1742.

¹⁴Ibid., January 18, 1742.

¹⁵Ibid., March 2, 1744.

¹⁶Ibid., December 19, 1782.

¹⁷Ibid., July 12, 1741.

strength, partly dragged and partly thrust him in among the people. When they had forced their way to the little table on which I stood, they tried several times to throw it down by thrusting the helpless beast against it, who of himself stirred no more than a log of wood. I once or twice put aside his head with my hand that the blood might not drop upon my clothes, intending to go on as soon as the hurry should be a little over. But the table falling down, some of our friends caught me in their arms and carried me right away on their shoulders, while the rabble wreaked their vengeance on the table, which they tore bit from bit.”¹⁸ At the Great Gardens “many of the beasts of the people labored much to disturb those who were of a better mind. They endeavored to drive in a herd of cows among them, but the brutes were wiser than their masters. They then threw whole showers of stones, one of which struck me just between the eyes. But I felt no pain at all, and when I had wiped away the blood went on testifying with a loud voice.”¹⁹

In 1765 Wesley rode to North-Taunton, a village which several of his preachers had previously visited. When he began to preach “a clergyman came with two or three, by the courtesy of England called gentlemen.” After a few statements “the minister cried out, ‘That is false doctrine; that is predestination.’ Then the roar began, to second which they had brought an huntsman with his hounds. But the dogs were wiser than the men, for they could not bring them to make any noise at all. One of the gentlemen supplied their place. He assured us he was such, or none would have suspected it. For his language was as base, foul, and porterly as ever was heard at Billingsgate. Dog, rascal, puppy, and the like terms adorned almost every sentence. . . . I left him the field and withdrew to my lodging.”²⁰ At Penzance “a company of soldiers were in town, whom, toward the close of the sermon, the good officer ordered to march through the congregation; but they readily opened and

¹⁸John Wesley, *Journal*, March 19, 1742.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, September 12, 1742.

²⁰*Ibid.*, September 4, 1765.

closed again. It made very little disturbance.”²¹ At Epworth “a kind of gentleman got a little party together and took great pains to disturb the congregation. He hired a company of boys to shout, and made a poor man exceedingly drunk, who bawled out much ribaldry and nonsense, while he himself played the French-horn. But he had little fruit for his labor.”²²

Cornwall and neighboring counties, which were places of such bitter persecution, as might be expected, were also the scenes of many disturbances. At Taunton in Somersetshire, Wesley says, “I had designed to preach in the yard of our inn; but before I had named my text, having uttered only two words, ‘Jesus Christ,’ a tradesman of the town (who it seems was mayor-elect) made so much noise and uproar that we thought it best to give him the ground.”²³ However, the people followed Wesley to a room where he preached. At Trebouan “the constable and his companions came and read the proclamation against riots. When he had done I told him, ‘We will do as you require; we will disperse within an hour,’ and went on with my sermon.”²⁴ At Newlyn “an immense multitude of people was gathered together; but their voice was as the roaring of the sea. I began to speak, and the noise died away. But before I had ended my prayer some poor wretches of Penzance began cursing and swearing, and thrusting the people off the bank. In two minutes I was thrown in the midst of them, when one of Newlyn, a bitter opposer till then, turned about and swore, ‘None shall meddle with the man: I will lose my life first.’ Many others were of his mind. So I walked a hundred yards forward, and finished my sermon without any interruption.”²⁵ At Saint Ives “Mr. S. sent his man to ride his horse to and fro through the midst of the congregation. Some of the chief men in the town bade me

²¹John Wesley, *Journal*, August 23, 1780.

²²*Ibid.*, June 13, 1763.

²³*Ibid.*, September 19, 1743.

²⁴*Ibid.*, July 10, 1742.

NOTE—Often the magistrates assumed that field preaching was rioting.

²⁵*Ibid.*, July 12, 1747.

go on, and said no man should hinder me; but I judged it better to retire to the room."²⁶ At Grimsby "a young gentleman with his companions quite drowned my voice till a poor woman took up the cause, and by reciting a few passages of his life wittily and keenly enough turned the laugh of all his companions full upon him. He could not stand it, but hastened away."²⁷

Once in a while the disturbers dispersed themselves, as for example the following: "I came to Wycombe. It being the day on which the mayor was chosen, abundance of rabble full of strong drink came to the preaching on purpose to disturb. But they soon fell out among themselves, so that I finished my sermon in tolerable quiet."²⁸ However, it was not always thus. At Skircoat-green "our brethren were much divided in their judgment. Many thought I ought to preach at Halifax-Cross. Others judged it to be impracticable; the very mention of it, as a possible thing, having set all the town in an uproar. However, to the Cross I went. There was an immense number of people, roaring like the waves of the sea. But the far greater part of them were still as soon as I began to speak. They seemed more and more attentive and composed till a gentleman got some of the rabble together, and began to throw money among them, which occasioned much hurry and confusion."²⁹ Wesley then removed to another place.

In Ireland occasionally the disturber got himself into trouble. At Swaddling-bar "a large room was offered; but it was quickly so full and so hot that I was obliged to go out into the street. I had hardly named my text before a poor papist at a small distance from me began blowing a horn. But a gentleman, stepping up, snatched his horn away, and without ceremony knocked him down."³⁰ At Kilfinnan "I had hardly begun to speak when a young person, a kind of gentleman, came and took great pains to

²⁶John Wesley, Journal, August 23, 1750.

²⁷Ibid., February 23, 1747.

²⁸Ibid., September 25, 1746.

²⁹Ibid., August 22, 1748.

³⁰Ibid., April 30, 1767.

make a disturbance. Mr. Dancer mildly desired him to desist; but was answered with a volley of oaths and blows. One of the town then encountered him and beat him well. But the noise preventing my being heard, I retired a few hundred yards, . . . and quietly finished my discourse.”³¹ “After a long day’s journey I preached in the new courthouse at Sligo to far the worst congregation that I have seen since I came into the kingdom. Some (miscalled gentry) laughed and talked without fear or shame till I openly reprovèd them; and the rabble was equally rude near the door.”³²

Wesley rode to Pocklington, and was sorry when he found it was fair-day; that notice had been given that he would preach, especially since he heard that there was no society in the town. Besides, the unusual bitterness of several who met him in the street made the prospect still more unpromising. As the room which had been provided was scarcely five yards square, he then looked at a yard which was proposed; “but one circumstance of this I did not like. It was plentifully furnished with stones; artillery ready at hand for the devil’s drunken champions.”³³ Soon a larger room was offered, to which he went immediately and preached without molestation.

The above shows Wesley’s caution; the following shows the craftiness of one of his friends: Wesley was preaching at Hartlepool. “Toward the close of the sermon, a queer, clumsy man, I suppose a country wit, took a great deal of pains to disturb the congregation. When I had done, fearing he might hurt those who were gathered about him, I desired two or three of our brethren to go to him, one after the other, and not to say much themselves, but let him talk till he was weary. They did so,

³¹John Wesley, *Journal*, May 25, 1767.

NOTE—At Athlone, says Wesley, “a Popish miller, prompted by his betters, so called, got up to preach over against me. But some of his comrades throwing a little dirt in his face, he leaped down in haste to fight them. This bred a fray in which he was so roughly handled that he was glad to get off with only a bloody nose.” (John Wesley, *Journal*, July 14, 1765.)

³²John Wesley, *Journal*, May 23, 1785.

³³*Ibid.*, April 25, 1752.

but without effect, as his fund of ribaldry seemed inexhaustible. William Atwood then tried another way. He got into the circle close to him, and, listening a while, he said, 'That is pretty; pray, say it over again.' 'What, are you deaf.' 'No; but for the entertainment of the people. Come: we are all attention.' After repeating this twice or thrice, the wag could not stand it, but with two or three curses walked clearly off."³⁴ "In the evening, though it was cold, I was obliged to preach abroad in Newcastle. One buffoon labored much to interrupt; but, as he was bawling with his mouth wide open, some arch boys gave him such a mouthful of dirt as quite satisfied him."³⁵ At Jatterson "I had finished my sermon when a gentleman, violently pressing in, bade the people get home and mind their business. As he used some bad words, my driver spake to him. He fiercely said, 'Do you think I need to be taught by a chaise-boy?' The lad replied, 'Really, sir, I do think so.' The conversation ended."³⁶

A great many times Wesley uses the expression, "Lost labor." Sometimes he looked straight into the eye of the disturbers, at other times some in the audience took the disturbers in hand. Often both preacher and listeners paid no attention to those who mocked, and thus their labor was lost. Occasionally Wesley went down among those who were disturbing, took them by the hand, and reasoned with them. At other times he rebuked them openly from the stand. He used a diversity of means according to circumstances. During his later years he so often speaks of disturbances by those who by the courtesy of England are called gentlemen. Sometimes he rebuked these openly, but oftener he paid no attention to them other than to pity them. Once he exclaims, "How much inferior to the keelmen and colliers!"³⁷

This is the nature of the disturbances by which Wesley was constantly annoyed. But these were the mild cases. It will be

³⁴John Wesley, *Journal*, July 4, 1759.

³⁵*Ibid.*, March 17, 1775.

³⁶*Ibid.*, July 21, 1777.

³⁷*Ibid.*, October 8, 1778.

of interest now to notice some of the mobs which he encountered, and the violence that he suffered.

The first real mob which he encountered was at Bristol. Here the court, the alleys, and all the street, upward and downward, were "filled with people, shouting, cursing, and swearing and ready to swallow the ground with fierceness of rage."³⁸ Later he heard that some of these were hired and made drunk for the purpose of disturbing him.³⁹ His next encounter was in London. He says: "As I returned home in the evening I had no sooner stepped out of the coach than the mob, who were gathered in great numbers about my door, quite closed me in." He immediately spoke to those that were next to him "of righteousness and judgment to come."⁴⁰ By this means he succeeded in restoring quiet. Two weeks later as he returned home he found "an innumerable mob round the door, who opened all their throats the moment they saw [him]."⁴¹ Again he succeeded in calming them, and by the same means as before. At Long-Lane many heavy stones were thrown, one of which went just over his shoulder.⁴² At Marylebone Fields many stones fell on his right and on his left.⁴³ At Long-Lane again the opposers "were above measure enraged; they not only made all possible noise, but violently thrust many persons to and fro, struck others, and brake down part of the house. At length they began throwing large stones upon the house, which forcing their way wherever they came, fell down together with the tiles among the people, so that they were in danger of their lives."⁴⁴

At Pelton: "As I was meeting the leaders a company of young men, having prepared themselves by strong drink, broke open the door, and came rushing in with the utmost fury."⁴⁵

³⁸John Wesley, Journal, April 1, 1740.

³⁹Ibid., April 12, 1740.

⁴⁰Ibid., September 14, 1740.

⁴¹Ibid., September 28, 1740.

⁴²Ibid., February 16, 1741.

⁴³Ibid., May 3, 1741.

⁴⁴Ibid., January 25, 1742.

⁴⁵Ibid., March 18, 1743.

However, their violence ended here. At Cowbridge "the sons of Belial, gathered themselves together, headed by one or two wretches, called gentlemen, and continued shouting, cursing, blaspheming, and throwing showers of stones almost without intermission. So, after some time spent in prayer for them, I judged it best to dismiss the congregation."⁴⁶ At Newcastle the mob assembled, but at the height of their rudeness they had some humanity left.⁴⁷ However, Wesley deemed it best to retire.

During the riots at Wednesbury several friends earnestly desired Wesley to call there. He went, and his experience was as follows:

At noon he preached near the middle of the town to a far larger congregation than he expected. He was not disturbed either during the service or while going to or from it. However, as he was writing at Francis Ward's in the afternoon, a cry arose that a mob had beset the house.⁴⁸ They joined in prayer, and the mob dispersed. He then told his friends that it was time to go. They pressed him exceedingly to stay, and in order that he might not offend them he remained, though he foresaw what would follow. Before five the mob surrounded the house in greater numbers than before. They all cried, "Bring out the minister; we will have the minister." Wesley desired one to take their captain by the hand and bring him into the house. After a few words he was quieted. He then desired him to go and bring in two or three of his companions who were most angry. He brought in two, who in a few minutes were as calm as their leader. Wesley then went out among the mob and, standing on a chair, he "asked, 'What do any of you want with me?' Some said, 'We want you to go with us to the justice.' I replied, 'That I will do with all my heart.' I then spoke a few words, which God applied, so that they cried out with might and main, 'This gentleman is an honest gentleman, and we will

⁴⁶John Wesley, *Journal*, May 7, 1743.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, July 10, 1743.

⁴⁸John Wesley, *Journal*, October 20, 1743; *Works*, *Modern Christianity Exemplified*, par. 34; *Letter to Mr. J. Smith*, June 25, 1746, par. 10, etc.

spill our blood in his defense.' I asked, 'Shall we go to the justice to-night or in the morning?' Most of them cried, 'To-night, to-night.' On which I went before and two or three hundred followed, the rest returning whence they came."

The night came on before they had walked a mile, and with it a heavy rain. However, they went on to Bently-Hall, two miles from Wednesbury. But the justice, Mr. Lane, sent word that he was in bed, and refused to see them. They then decided to go to Justice Persehouse at Walsal. But he likewise sent word that he was in bed, and also refused to see them. The mob then dispersed. About fifty undertook to convoy Wesley, but they had not gone far when the mob from Walsal came upon them. The Darlstan mob made what defense they could, but they were weary as well as outnumbered, so in a short time, after many had been knocked down, the rest ran away and left Wesley with the Walsal mob.

He says: "To attempt speaking was vain, for the noise on every side was like the roaring of the sea. So they dragged me along till we came to the town; where, seeing the door of a large house open, I attempted to go in, but a man, catching me by the hair, pulled me back into the middle of the mob. They made no more stop till they had carried me through the main street from one end of town to the other. I continued speaking all the time to those within hearing, feeling no pain or weariness. At the west end of the town, seeing a door half open, I made toward it, and would have gone in but a gentleman in the shop would not suffer me, saying, 'They would pull the house down to the ground.' However, I stood at the door and asked, 'Are you willing to hear me speak?' Many cried out: 'No, no! Knock his brains out! Down with him! Kill him at once!' Others said, 'Nay, but we will hear him first.' I began asking, 'What evil have I done? Which of you all have I wronged in word or deed?' And continued speaking for above a quarter of an hour till my voice suddenly failed. Then the floods began to lift up their voices again; and many cried out, 'Bring him away, bring him away!'"

"In the meantime my strength and my voice returned, and I broke out aloud into prayer. And now the man, who just before headed the mob, turned and said, 'Sir, I will spend my life for you; follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head.'" Others now aided him, which checked the mob. It rallied again at the bridge and continued for a time. But at ten, he says, "God brought me safe to Wednesbury, having lost only one flap of my waistcoat, and a little skin from one of my hands."

Wherever there are accounts of Wesley's trials by others they show that Wesley minimizes his own sufferings. The next day Charles Wesley met his brother. He says: "My brother came, delivered out of the mouth of the lions. He looked like a soldier of Christ. His clothes were torn to tatters. The mob of Wednesbury, Darlston, and Walsal were permitted to take him by night out of the Society-house and carry him about several hours with a full purpose to murder him."⁴⁹ A few days later Charles got the full particulars from others: "Three of the brethren and one young woman kept near him all the time, striving to intercept the blows. Sometimes he was almost borne upon their shoulders through the violence of the multitude, who struck at him continually that he might fall. And, if he had once been down he would have risen no more. Many blows he escaped through his lowness of stature, and his enemies were struck down by them."⁵⁰ . . . "The ruffians ran about asking, 'Which is the minister?' and lost and found and lost him again. . . . Some cried, 'Drown him! Throw him into a pit!' Some, 'Hang him up upon the next tree!' Others, 'Away with him!' and some did him the infinite honor to cry in express terms, 'Crucify him!' One and all said, 'Kill him,' but they were not agreed what death to put him to. . . ." ⁵¹

"To some who cried, 'Strip him; tear off his clothes!' he mildly answered, 'That you need not do; I will give you my

⁴⁹Charles Wesley, *Journal*, October 21, 1743.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, October 25, 1743.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, October 21, 1743.

clothes if you want them.' In the intervals of tumult he spoke, the brethren assured me, with as much composure and correctness as he used to do in their Societies. The spirit of glory rested upon him. As many as he spoke to, or but laid his hand on, he turned into friends. He did not wonder, as he himself told me, that the martyrs should feel no pain in the flames; for none of their blows hurt him, although one was so violent as to make his nose and mouth gush out with blood. . . . Just as he was within another door, one fastened his hand in his hair, and drew him backward almost to the ground. A brother, with the peril of his life, fell on the man's hand and bit it, which forced him to loose his hold."⁵²

"The instrument of his deliverance at last was the ringleader of the mob, the greatest profligate in the country. He carried him through the river upon his shoulders.⁵³ A sister they threw into it. Another's arm they broke. No farther hurt was done our people; but many of our enemies were sadly wounded."⁵⁴

Though there had been much rioting in Cornwall, yet here also Wesley escaped with but little personal injury. At Saint Ives he received one blow on the side of the head.⁵⁵ The next April he says, "As soon as we went out we were saluted, as usual, with a huzza, and a few stones or pieces of dirt."⁵⁶

At Falmouth he was very fortunate in his escape. He says: "About three in the afternoon I went to see a gentlewoman who had been long indisposed. Almost as soon as I was set down the house was beset on all sides by an innumerable multitude of people. A louder or more confused noise could hardly be at the

⁵²Charles Wesley, *Journal*, Oct. 21, 1743.

⁵³NOTE—On this occasion Charles says: "I took several new members into the society; and among them the young man whose arm was broke, and, upon trial, Munchin, the late captain of the mob. He has been constantly under the Word since he rescued my brother." (Charles Wesley, *Journal*, October 25, 1743.) It appears that Munchin had been a prize fighter, and it was he who rescued Wesley. (John Wesley, *Journal*, October 20, 1743.)

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, October 21, 1743.

⁵⁵John Wesley, *Journal*, September 16, 1743.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, April 3, 1744.

taking of a city by storm. . . . The rabble roared with all their throats, 'Bring out the Canorum! Where is the Canorum!'—an unmeaning word which the Cornish generally use instead of Methodist. No answer being given, they quickly forced open the outer door, and filled the passage. Only a wainscot partition was between us, which was not likely to stand long. I immediately took down a large looking glass, which hung against it, supposing the whole side would fall in at once. When they began their work with bitter imprecations, poor Kitty was utterly astonished, and cried out, 'O, sir, what must we do?' I said, 'We must pray.' Indeed, at that time, to all appearance, our lives were not worth an hour's purchase. She asked, 'But, sir, is it not better for you to hide yourself? to get in the closet?' I answered, 'No, it is better for me to stand just where I am.' Among those without were the crews of some privateers, which were lately come into the harbor. Some of these being angry at the slowness of the rest, thrust them away, and coming up altogether, set their shoulders to the inner door, and cried out, 'Avast, lads, avast!' Away went all the hinges at once, and the door fell back into the room. I stepped forward at once into the midst of them, and said: 'Here I am. Which of you has any thing to say to me? To which of you have I done any wrong? To you? Or you? Or you?' I continued speaking till I came, bareheaded as I was (for I purposely left my hat that they might all see my face), into the middle of the street, and then raising my voice, said: 'Neighbors, countrymen! Do you desire to hear me speak?' They cried out vehemently: 'Yes, yes. He shall speak. He shall. Nobody shall hinder him.' But, having nothing to stand on and no advantage of ground, I could be heard by few only. However, I spoke without intermission, and as far as the sound reached the people were still: till one or two of their captains turned about and swore, 'Not a man shall touch him.'"⁵⁷ Wesley was then conducted to the town, which he soon after left by boat.

⁵⁷John Wesley, Journal, July 4, 1745.

In 1745 Wesley was preaching at Tolcarn when a mob arose. As he stood upon a high wall and kept his eyes upon them many were softened, and grew calmer and calmer. One of their captains observing this went round and pushed him down. He lit on his feet, and finding himself near one of the bitterest of the horsemen, he took him by the hand and held it while he argued the case with him. The man was not convinced, but he grew milder and they parted civilly.⁵⁸

This year, 1745, Wesley was at Wednesbury again. At first a few persons threw some clods, but they soon retreated, after which there was no disturbance at all.⁵⁹ At Leeds, however, after preaching and meeting the society, the mob pelted him and his friends with dirt and stones a great part of the way home. In the evening he preached again. The congregation was much larger, "and so was the mob at our return and likewise in higher spirits, being ready to knock out all our brains, for joy, that the Duke of Tuscany was emperor."⁶⁰ At Leeds, some later, he says: "I preached at five. As we went home a great mob followed and threw whatever came to hand. I was struck several times, once or twice in the face, but not hurt at all."⁶¹

At Plymouth: "As we were entering the dock one met us and desired we would go the back way. 'For,' said he, 'there are thousands of people waiting about Mr. Hide's doors.' We rode straight into the midst of them. They saluted us with three huzzas, after which I alighted, took several of them by the hand, and began to talk with them. I would gladly have passed an hour with them, and believe, if I had, there had been an end of the riot; but the day being far spent—for it was past nine o'clock—I was persuaded to go in. The mob then recovered their spirits and fought valiantly with the doors and windows."⁶²

At Shepton the mob, hired and made drunk for the occasion,

⁵⁸John Wesley, *Journal*, July 7, 1745.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, May 5, 1745.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, September 12, 1745.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, February 22, 1746.

⁶²*Ibid.*, June 26, 1747.

mistook the place of preaching, so were too late to prevent the service. "However," says Wesley, "they attended us from the preaching house to William Stone's, throwing dirt, stones, and clods in abundance, but they could not hurt us. . . . After we were gone into the house they began throwing great stones in order to break the door; but . . . they dropped that design for the present. They first broke all the tiles on the penthouse over the door, and then poured in a shower of stones at the windows." After a time Wesley concluded that it was better to leave the house. So, while the mob burst in at one door, they walked out at the other. No one noticed them, though they were within five yards of each other.⁶³

At Newlyn, while preaching, Wesley met "a rude, gaping, staring rabble-rout, some or other of whom were throwing dirt or stones continually."⁶⁴ They quieted, however, before he had finished. But at Roughlee it was quite different. He had heard that a mob was coming from Colne, so he hastened on and began preaching a little after twelve. When about half through his discourse the mob came and broke up the meeting.⁶⁵ The captain of the mob said that he was a deputy constable and that he was come to take Wesley to the justice. Wesley says: "I went with him, but I had scarce gone ten yards when a man of his company struck me with his fist in the face with all his might. Quickly after another threw his stick at my head." They then took Wesley to the justice, and Wesley desired the officer to let him

⁶³John Wesley, Journal, February 12, 1748.

NOTE—At this house one of the captains of the mob, who had followed them inside, found that he could not get out. He was greatly disturbed at this and kept close to Wesley, thinking himself safer when near him. But, says Wesley, "staying a little behind, when I went up a pair of stairs and stood close on one side where we were a little sheltered, a large stone struck him on the forehead, and the blood spouted out like a stream. He cried out: 'O, sir, are we to die to-night? What must I do? What must I do?' I said: 'Pray to God. He is able to deliver you from all danger.' He took my advice, and began praying in such a manner as he had scarce done ever since he was born." (John Wesley, Journal, February 12, 1748.)

⁶⁴John Wesley, Journal, September 25, 1748.

⁶⁵Ibid., August 24, 1748.

go. Once he attempted to go with the deputy constable, but the mob immediately followed with oaths, curses, and stones. One of them beat him to the ground, and when he arose the whole mob surrounded him and forced him back into the house. All this time the officer was talking of justice and law. The magistrate finally took Wesley away from the mob.⁶⁶ Later, when he visited this place, he found that there had been no tumults there since a Mr. W—— had died.⁶⁷

In 1748 Wesley met a vast number of people at Bolton, who were utterly wild. While he was preaching they continued endeavoring to thrust him down from the steps on which he was standing. They succeeded several times, but he walked back up again.⁶⁸ Then they threw stones. But he was not hurt.⁶⁹ The next year, however, he met here a mob that possessed such rage and bitterness as he had scarcely ever seen in any creature that bore the form of man. They followed him and his friends to the house where they went, and as soon as they had entered the mob took possession of all the avenues to it and filled the streets from one end to the other. The mob burst into the house, took one of the company and rolled him in the mud. But the Methodists talked to the ruffians and finally Wesley got a hearing, which quieted them.⁷⁰

Wesley was desired to preach at Llanerellymadd, Wales. He went, but as he entered a house, he says, "We were scarce set down when the sons of Belial from all parts, gathered together, and compassed the house. I could just understand their oaths

⁶⁶John Wesley, *Journal*.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, June 8, 1752.

⁶⁸NOTE—Tables sometimes turn. At this time, Wesley says, "one man was bawling just at my ear when a stone struck him on the cheek, and he was still. A second was forcing his way down to me till another stone hit him on the forehead. . . . He came no farther. A third, being close to me, stretched out his hand, and in the instant a sharp stone came upon the joints of his fingers. He shook his hand, and was very quiet." (*John Wesley, Journal*, August 28, 1748.)

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, August 28, 1748.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, October 18, 1749.

and curses, which . . . sounded on every side. . . . I judged it best to look them in the face while it was open day. So I bade them open the door, and Mr. Hooper and I walked straight through the midst of them."⁷¹ This quieted the rabble.⁷²

At Eden-derry in Ireland, according to his custom, Wesley went to church. He says, "When I came out I had a large attendance, even in the churchyard, hallooing and calling names."⁷³ At Waterford he was warned of threatened trouble, and after a short stay, rode on. At eleven o'clock at night he reached Emo, he says, "and would willingly have passed the rest of the night there, but the good woman of the inn was not minded that I should. For some time she would not answer; at last she opened the door just wide enough to let out four dogs upon me. So I rode on."⁷⁴ At Waterford he went to the courthouse and began preaching, "but the mob was so numerous and noisy that few could hear. Perceiving the noise increased more and more, I walked through the midst of the mob to my lodgings. They halloed and shouted and cursed again,"⁷⁵ but that was all.

The following is said to be quoted from the diary of Samuel Wood, a Methodist preacher of a later date: "I was hardly five years old in April, 1773, when I saw that venerable servant of God, the Rev. John Wesley, shamefully treated by a rude and desperate mob while he was preaching in the Bowling Green, Waterford. . . . I stood at the table upon which Mr. Wesley was standing; and while I heard the shouting of the crowd, and saw the dead animals and cabbage stalks flying around his hoary head, I was filled with pity and horror. . . . Mr. Wesley

⁷¹John Wesley, *Journal*, April 1, 1750.

⁷²NOTE—While waiting for a boat in Wales the house where Wesley was being entertained was beset by a mob and the door burst open. The captain burst in first. The daughter was standing in the hall with a pail of water, with which, either purposely or from fright, she covered him from head to foot. He became so alarmed that he cried as well as he could, "Murder! murder!" This ended the riot. (John Wesley, *Journal*, March 31, 1750.)

⁷³John Wesley, *Journal*, April 17, 1748.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, June 15, 1750.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, September 2, 1752.

must have been seriously injured but for the manly intervention of Mr. Alcock," who took him in his arms and carried him to a neighboring house.⁷⁶

After 1750 Wesley makes numerous references to mobs coming to disturb, but becoming quiet as soon as he came to the place, or when he began to preach, or at any rate shortly after he had commenced his sermon. This indicates that he was beginning to win his way in England. However, there were still a few instances of violence to him, and occasionally, as we have already seen, it was very severe.

At Durham he went into the street to preach, but the mob was so numerous and so loud that it was not possible for many to hear. However, he spoke on, so to prevent this some of the rabble brought an engine and threw water on the congregation, but none fell upon him.⁷⁷ At Evesham he had to withdraw from the place where he began to preach and go to the society room.⁷⁸ At Pocklington a large mob gathered, "and for fear they should not make noise enough, the good churchwarden hired men to ring the bells."⁷⁹ At Burslem a clod struck him on the side of the head.⁸⁰ At Southney-Green, he says, "a lewd, profane, drunken vagabond had so stirred up many of the baser sort that there was much noise, hurry, and confusion. While I was preaching several things were thrown, and much pains taken to overturn the table. And after I concluded many endeavored to throw me down, but I walked through the midst and left them."⁸¹ At Norwich "the mob gathered in great numbers, made a huge noise, and began to throw large stones against the outward door."⁸² They soon put themselves out of breath and left.⁸³

⁷⁶Anon., John Wesley, the Methodist, p. 216.

⁷⁷John Wesley, Journal, May 25, 1752.

⁷⁸Ibid., March 21, 1753.

⁷⁹Ibid., July 15, 1757.

⁸⁰Ibid., March 9, 1760.

⁸¹Ibid., August 29, 1762.

⁸²Ibid., October 15, 1764.

⁸³NOTE—At Bradford, when nearly through his sermon, some began to

Mr. J. U. Walker relates that a service which was conducted by Wesley on the Cow-Green at Halifax "is remembered by one or two aged individuals to this day. . . . A singular scene took place in the public street while Mr. Wesley, attended by his friends, was either going to or coming from the Cow-Green. . . . A man of the name of Bramley, unable longer to subdue his fiendish rage, burst through the crowd, and running toward Mr. Wesley struck him a most violent blow with the flat of his hand on the cheek. The holy saint paused, and, though tears started from his eyes from the smartness of the blow, he remembered the admonition of his Master, 'Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.' He turned to his avenger 'the other cheek also.' The coward was so struck with the circumstance that he slunk back into the crowd."⁸⁴ Wesley mentions having been at Halifax, but he makes no mention of this shameful incident.⁸⁵ And the shame of it is intensified by the fact that now Wesley was sixty-nine years old, a man whose age at least should have made such an occurrence impossible. His trials were great indeed, but certainly not less remarkable than the patience with which he bore them. Certainly, this was not to satisfy personal ambition,⁸⁶ but for the furtherance of a cause in which he most profoundly believed. For its sake he not only suffered violence, but he sacrificed his most cherished desires, as well as the ordinary comforts of life. When an old man he frequently expressed his longing for home and rest. He says: "I enjoyed a little rest. I do not find the least change in this respect. I love quietness and silence as well as ever, but, if I am called into noise and tumult, all is

disturb, Wesley says, "especially one, called a gentleman, who had filled his pockets with rotten eggs. But a young man, coming unawares, clapped his hands on each side and mashed them all at once. In an instant he was perfume all over, though it was not so sweet as balsam." (John Wesley, Journal, September 19, 1769.)

⁸⁴J. U. Walker, History of Wesleyan Methodism in Halifax, p. 121.

⁸⁵John Wesley, Journal, July 8, 1772.

⁸⁶Lecky, England in the Eighteenth Century, vol. iv, p. 598.

well.”⁸⁷ “I rested here. Lovely place, and lovely company. But I believe there is another world; therefore, I must ‘arise and go hence.’”⁸⁸ “How gladly would I rest here a few days! but it is not my place. I am to be a wanderer upon the earth; only let me find rest in a better world.”⁸⁹ It is little wonder that such a man received from his followers deep tributes of esteem.

Exposed to brutal insolence and rage,
 Seized by the violent hands of ruffians rude,
 The lawless rabble riotous ingage,
 Threaten his life, and vow to drink his blood.

.

Each threatening storm he more than dared to meet
 Though perils, dangers, deaths, his way pursued;
 While, with the love of God and man replete,
 Firm as a rock impregnable he stood.

.

As a good soldier hardships to endure,
 By every grace, by truth and love unfeigned;
 Thus armed with righteousness and knowledge pure,
 Contempt, reproach and suffering he sustained.

.

Trampling on honor, pleasure, wealth, and fame,
 Through what a length of useful days he ran!
 One universal character the same,
 The faithful, gracious, self-consistent man.

Splendor and pomp, how little did he prize!
 By him how valued, loved the poor, the low!
 How did he with each sufferer sympathize,
 A constant sharer of their every woe!

.

His virtue gave him majesty in death:
 His happy spirit ready-winged for flight;
 “I’ll praise—I’ll praise”—employed his latest breath,
 Then soared away to realms of endless light.⁹⁰

⁸⁷John Wesley, *Journal*, May 1, 1766.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, June 23, 1779.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, July 3, 1788.

⁹⁰James Kenton, *A Token . . . to Memory of John Wesley*, p. 11, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. ccxxvii.

CHAPTER III

CHARLES WESLEY

CHARLES WESLEY took very little part in the controversies with which the Methodists were constantly engaged. His faculties expressed themselves in writing lyrics. Some of his songs were written on horseback, some while the mob was threatening, but most of them, of course, while in the calm of a quiet retreat. However, so remarkable was this gift that it mattered little under what circumstances he was placed he could compose hymns.

As a preacher he was not the equal either of his brother or of Whitefield. Nor did he possess the remarkable tact of his brother in handling the mobs. Yet no one can doubt his courage. He boldly faced any mob, and even in the greatest danger was undismayed.

He was a strict churchman, and when necessity compelled John Wesley to adopt expedients, Charles Wesley could not follow him. Moreover, during his entire active life he suffered from ill health. Because of these facts, during much of his life, and especially during his later years, he was much less active as an itinerant than his brother. He resided much at Bristol or London, and, during his brother's absence, he cared for the Societies near his home. However, in his earlier years he certainly suffered violence as a good soldier.

In March, 1739, he expounded the gospel at a friend's, where he found a troublesome opposer.¹ The next month he was opposed at Broadoaks, and after the service an opponent, half in jest and half in earnest, struck him.² He had difficulty again at Gloucester, where "some without attempted to make a disturbance by

¹Charles Wesley, *Journal*, March 25, 1739.

²*Ibid.*, May 27, 1739.

setting on the dogs.”³ At Evesham the enemy was quiet till he announced the last hymn, when they set up a roar.⁴ At Blackheath a woman screamed out so loud that he could not be heard. She was removed.⁵ On another occasion he was informed that many had bound themselves with a curse to make a disturbance in the church and not allow him to preach.⁶

The next year he visited the fashionable quarters. He says: “Satan took it ill to be attacked in his headquarters, that Sodom of our land, Bath. While I was explaining the trembling jailer’s question he raged horribly in his children. They went out, and came in again, and mocked, and at last roared as if each man’s name was legion.”⁷ At Shields Wesley went to church. There the minister could not be heard while reading prayers, but, says Wesley, “I heard him loud enough afterward, calling for the churchwardens to quiet the disturbance. . . . I fancy he thought I should preach there. . . . The clerk came to me bawling out it was consecrated ground, and I had no business to preach on it. . . . When he had cried himself out of breath I whispered him in the ear that I had no intention to preach there.”⁸ Later he preached in the churchyard, where “the churchwardens and others labored in vain to interrupt by throwing dirt, nay, and money, among the people.”⁹ At Leeds, he says, “in the midst of my discourse a gentleman came riding up, and almost over the people.”¹⁰

At Shepton-Mallet a drunken man attempted to disturb him,¹¹ and at London a cracker was thrown into the room, which many thought was the discharge of a gun.¹² At Morva

³Charles Wesley, *Journal*, August 23, 1739.

⁴*Ibid.*, March 25, 1740.

⁵*Ibid.*, May 14, 1740.

⁶*Ibid.*, November 16, 1740.

⁷*Ibid.*, July 11, 1741.

⁸*Ibid.*, June 16, 1743.

⁹*Ibid.*, June 16, 1743.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, February 12, 1744.

¹¹*Ibid.*, August 10, 1745.

¹²*Ibid.*, October 18, 1745.

stones were thrown while he was preaching,¹³ and at Saint Eudy's, as he was concluding, a gentleman rode up to him fiercely, and ordered him to cease.¹⁴ At Dudley some drunkards endeavored to silence him,¹⁵ while at Youghal "a wild multitude following, almost crowded me and one another to death."¹⁶

At Lakeham, toward the close of his service, a huge man tried to ride up to him, but the people interfered.¹⁷ In 1754 two drunken men tried to interrupt him. One of them "laid his mouth to my ear, and talked almost the whole time" that Wesley was speaking.¹⁸ And in 1780 in a letter to his daughter he says: "The roaring of the waves is ceased, but the agitation continues. . . . No wonder your mother was terrified when I was proscribed as a popish priest."¹⁹

It is well now to notice some of the severer trials that he suffered.

Early in his career he was obliged to face court proceedings. While walking over an open field to Kennington Common, where he was to preach, he was threatened with arrest for trespass.²⁰ A little over two weeks later he was served with a writ.²¹ The editor of his journal adds the following footnote: "The damages with which he was charged were 10 pounds; and the taxed costs of the suit which he was required to pay, amounted to 9 pounds, 16 shillings, and 8 pence. The bill of this nefarious transaction had been preserved among the family papers of Mr. Charles Wesley, with the following indorsement in his own handwriting: 'I paid them the things that I never took.' 'To be rejudged in that day.'"²²

¹³Charles Wesley, *Journal*, July 27, 1746.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, August 11, 1746.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, October 13, 1746.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, September 8, 1748.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, July 24, 1754.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, August 2, 1754.

¹⁹Charles Wesley, Letter to his daughter, June 14, 1780, *Journal*, vol. ii, p. 281.

²⁰Charles Wesley, *Journal*, July 8, 1739.

²¹*Ibid.*, July 25, 1739.

²²*Ibid.*, October 18, 1739.

At Wakefield, in 1744, Wesley endured a very unpleasant experience with the justices. As he was setting out for his next preaching place he was told that a constable had a warrant in which his name was mentioned. He sent for the constable, who showed him the warrant. It was "To the Constable of Birstal, in the said Riding or Deputy." "These are, in His Majesty's name, to require and command you to summon Mary Castle of Birstal, aforesaid, and all other such persons as you are informed can give any information against one Westley, or any other of the Methodist speakers, for speaking any treasonable words or exhortations, as praying for the banished, or for the Pretender, &c., to appear before me." Upon this information Wesley decided that it was not wise for him to leave till the matter was cleared up. When Mary Castle heard that he had not gone she turned back, saying that she had not heard his statement herself, but that another woman had told her. Three other witnesses did likewise. Wesley went to the justice, who said that he had nothing against him, and that he might depart.²³ This Wesley refused to do till he was cleared of the charge. Wesley had prayed the Lord to bring home again His banished, which is an expression based upon the biblical dialogue between the woman of Tekoa and King David.²⁴ Wesley says, "When all their business was over, and I had been insulted at their door from eleven in the morning till seven at night, I was sent for, and asked, 'What would Mr. Wesley desire?'" Wesley replied that he desired nothing but to know what was alleged against him. After some more delay the justice told him that he might depart, for they had nothing against him. Wesley replied: "Sir, that is not sufficient; I cannot depart till my character is fully cleared. It is no trifling matter. Even my life is concerned in the charge."²⁵ After considerable more parleying they allowed him to explain his words. He then asked that the oaths be administered to him, and after some more talk he departed with

²³Charles Wesley, Journal, March 17, 1744.

²⁴2 Sam. 14. 11ff.

²⁵Charles Wesley, Journal, March 15, 1744.

his "loyalty unquestionable." But he thought he saw clearly that had he set out without looking into the matter, there would have been witnesses enough in his absence to have made serious trouble. It appears that his presence overawed the witnesses, and prevented their false testimony.

At Bengeworth Wesley found strong opposition. While he was preaching, he says, "a troop poured in from a neighboring alehouse, and set up their champion, a school master, upon a bench over against me. For near an hour he spoke for his master, and I for mine, but my voice prevailed."²⁶

Charles Wesley had his encounter with the mobs at Wednesbury, though less violent than that of his brother. He says: "We were received with the old complaint, 'Behold they that turn the world upside down are come here also.' I walked through the town amidst the noisy greetings of our enemies, and stood on the steps of the market house. An host of men was laid against us. The floods lifted up their voice and raged horribly." He began to preach, and he says: "The street was full of fierce Ephesian beasts, the principal men setting them on, who roared and shouted, and threw stones incessantly. Many struck without hurting me. I besought them in calm love to be reconciled to Christ. While I was departing a stream of ruffians was suffered to bear me from the steps. I rose, . . . and was beat down again." The third time he arose, gave thanks, and dismissed the audience, then walked quietly back through the thickest rioters, who reviled, but did not injure him.²⁷ The next day he preached again, but does not mention any molestation.

He was here again in October, a few days after the riot in which his brother was mobbed. He seems to have escaped any disturbance.²⁸ He again visited the place in February, 1744, and again he seems not to have encountered any riots.²⁹

At Sheffield Wesley encountered a violent mob. He says:

²⁶Charles Wesley, *Journal*, March 17, 1740.

²⁷*Ibid.*, May 21, 1743.

²⁸*Ibid.*, October 25, 1743.

²⁹*Ibid.*, February 5, 1744.

"I came to the flock who are as sheep in the midst of wolves. . . . As soon as I was in the desk with David Taylor the floods began to lift up their voice. An officer, Ensign Garden, contradicted and blasphemed. I took no notice of him, and sung on. The stones flew thick, hitting the desk and people. To save them and the house I gave notice I should preach out, and look the enemy in the face."³⁰

"The whole army of aliens followed me. The Captain laid hold on me, and began reviling. . . . The stones often struck me in the face. After sermon I prayed for sinners, as servants of their master, the devil; upon which the captain ran at me with great fury, threatening revenge for my abusing, as he called it, 'the King his master.' He forced his way through the brethren, drew his sword, and presented it to my breast. My breast was immediately steeled. I threw it open, and, fixing my eye on his, smiled in his face, and calmly said, 'I fear God and honor the King.' His countenance fell in a moment. He fetched a deep sigh, put up his sword, and quietly left the place.

"We returned to Brother Bennet's and gave ourselves unto prayer. The rioters followed and exceeded in their outrage all I have seen before. . . . They pressed hard to break open the door. I would have gone out to them, but the brethren would not suffer me. They labored all night for their master, and by morning had pulled down one end of the house."³¹

The next day, according to agreement, he preached in the heart of the town, after which, he says: "I took David Taylor and walked through the open street to our brother Bennet's with the multitude at my heels. We passed by the spot where the house stood: they had not left one stone upon another. . . . The mob attended me to my lodgings with great civility, but as soon as I was entered the house they renewed their threatenings to pull it down. The windows were smashed in an instant, and my poor host so frightened that he was ready to give up his

³⁰Charles Wesley, Journal, May 25, 1743.

³¹Ibid.

shield.”³² Shortly after this the riot act was read among them, and within an hour they all had left the place.

As he was turning up a lane at Thorpe “the ambush rose and assaulted us with stones, eggs, and dirt. My horse flew from side to side till he forced his way through them. . . . I returned and asked what was the reason a clergyman could not pass without such treatment. At first the rioters scattered, but their captain, rallying, answered with horrible imprecations and stones that would have killed both man and beast had they not been turned aside by a hand unseen. My horse took fright and hurried away with me down a steep hill. . . . I got no hurt, but only the eggs and the dirt. My clothes abhorred me.”³³

Tyerman says that the Methodists were invited to Saint Ives, Cornwall, and that Charles Wesley was the first to go there.³⁴ As he entered the town “the boys and others continued their rough salute for some time.” Two days later he says: “I went forth to the market house. When we came to the place of battle the enemy was ready, set in array against us. I began the Hundredth Psalm, and they beating their drum and shouting. I stood still and silent for some time, finding they would not receive my testimony, then offered to speak to some of the most violent, but they stopped their ears, and ran upon me to pull me down.” He then left the place and “walked leisurely through the thickest of them, who followed like ramping and roaring lions.”³⁵ Four days later he had just named his text “when an army of rebels broke in upon us like those at Sheffield or Wednesday. They began in a most outrageous manner, threatening to murder the people if they did not go out that moment. They broke the sconces, dashed the windows in pieces, tore away the shutters, benches, poor-box, and all but the stone walls. . . . They swore bitterly I should not preach there again. . . . Several times they lifted up their hands and clubs to strike me, but a

³²Charles Wesley, *Journal*, May 26, 1743.

³³*Ibid.*, June 27, 1743.

³⁴Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 416.

³⁵Charles Wesley, *Journal*, July 16, 1743, and July 18, 1743.

stronger arm restrained them." After about an hour they fell to quarreling among themselves and drove one another out of the room.³⁶ Three days later he had warning of an approaching trial. He says: "I had scarce begun at the room when news was brought that all the gentlemen were coming to pull it down. . . . About half a dozen came first and threw eggs in at the windows. Others cast great stones to break what remained of the shutters. Others struck the women and swore they would have the house down." The people were then dismissed.³⁷

The first time he preached at Pool a drunken miner sought to disturb him,³⁸ the second time the churchwarden, heading a mob, drove the preacher and congregation to the border of the parish;³⁹ when leaving them there, he returned and rewarded his followers with drink in the old alehouse at Pool.⁴⁰

At Wednock Wesley went to church and heard "such a hodgepotch of railing, foolish lies as Satan himself might be ashamed of."⁴¹ A week later he says: "I would have finished my discourse but the minister's mob fell upon us, threatening and striking all they came near. They swore horribly they would be revenged on us for our making such a disturbance on the Sabbath day, our taking the people from the church, and doing so much mischief continually. They assaulted us with sticks and stones, and endeavored to pull me down." Wesley was compelled to yield the ground.⁴²

At Birmingham he preached close to a church, "where they rang the bells, threw dirt and stones all the time. None struck me till I had finished my discourse. Then I got several

³⁶Charles Wesley, *Journal*, July 22, 1743.

³⁷*Ibid.*, July 25, 1743.

³⁸*Ibid.*, July 19, 1743.

³⁹*Ibid.*, July 26, 1743.

⁴⁰Geo. Smith, *History of Wesleyan Methodism*, vol. i, pp. 202ff.

NOTE—Dr. Smith says: "The following entry may now be found in the parish book at Illogan: 'Expense at Ann Gartrell's on driving the Methodists, nine shillings.'" (Geo. Smith, *History of Wesleyan Methodism*, vol. i, pp. 202ff.)

⁴¹Charles Wesley, *Journal*, July 17, 1743.

⁴²*Ibid.*, July 24, 1743.

blows from the mob that followed me.”⁴³ Two days later he gave notice that he would preach at the Cross. He says, “In the way the mob assaulted us with dirt and stones, making us as the filth and offscouring of all things.”⁴⁴

At Tanfield Wesley found a great mob about the house and spent about an hour in taming it.⁴⁵ He was on his way to Barley Hall to preach when a mob, having heard of his coming, concealed itself in the road and attacked him unexpectedly as he came along. A friend interfered, so that he escaped with only the loss of his hat.⁴⁶ Again, in the vicinity of Bath, he says that just as he had given out his text, “Mr. Justice called out and bade them pull me down. He had stood at a distance, striving to raise a mob, but not a man would stir at his bidding. Only one behind struck me with a stone. While I was in prayer he cried again, ‘Pull him down.’ I told him I had nothing now to do but to pray for him. He answered, ‘I have nothing to do with prayer.’ ‘So I suppose, sir,’ said I, ‘but we have.’ He came up and laid hold on my gown, but I stepped down to save him trouble.” This ended the preaching, but after some conversation Wesley and the justice parted in peace.⁴⁷

Wesley had an encounter with a mob at Shoreham. He says: “As soon as I began preaching the wild beasts began roaring, stamping, blaspheming, ringing the bells, and turning the church into a bear garden. I spake on for half an hour, though only the nearest could hear. The rioters followed us to Mr. Perronet’s house, raging, threatening, and throwing stones. . . . They continued their uproar after we were housed.”⁴⁸ At Penkridge, near Wednesbury, Wesley says: “We had hardly set down when the sons of Belial beset the house, and beat at the door. I ordered it to be set open, and immediately they filled the house.

⁴³Charles Wesley, *Journal*, February 5, 1744.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, February 7, 1744.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, February 26, 1744.

⁴⁶James Everett, *Methodism in Sheffield*, pp. 46ff.

⁴⁷Charles Wesley, *Journal*, September 9, 1744.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, September 16, 1746.

I sat still in the midst of them for half an hour." Again, by reasoning with the mob, there was no personal violence suffered.⁴⁹

At Hexham a squire tried to raise a disturbance, but was unsuccessful. A titled gentleman then sent word, ordering Wesley to leave the town, and threatened arrest in case he should preach any more. Wesley replied that, as he had made no announcement, he would not preach at the Cross. He then preached in the cockpit.⁵⁰ A few weeks later he attempted to preach in the same place. But two butlers and two justices created a disturbance. "They brought their cocks and set them a-fighting." Wesley says: "I gave them the ground and walked straight to the Cross, where was four times as many as the other place could hold. Our enemies followed and strove by all the ways permitted them to annoy us," but without success.⁵¹

The following incident has a peculiar interest because of the nature of its termination. Wesley says: "I got to Grimsby by three, saluted by the shouting mob. At six I began speaking at the room, and the floods lifted up their voice. Several poor, wild creatures, almost naked, ran about the room, striking down all they met. . . . The uproar lasted near an hour, when I told the poor wretches that I shook off the dust of my feet against them. Several of them caught at me to drag me down; others interposed, and kept their companions off. I laid my hand upon their captain, and he sat down like a lamb at my feet the whole time. One struck at me, and J. Crawford received my blow. . . . Another of the rebels cried out, 'What, you dog! do you strike a clergyman?' and fell upon his comrade. Immediately every man's hand was against his fellow; and they fell to fighting and beating one another, till, in a few minutes, they had all driven one another out of the room."⁵² Wesley then preached. Two days later he preached here again, and says, "At parting

⁴⁹Charles Wesley, *Journal*, October 15, 1746.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, November 27, 1746.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, December 18, 1746.

⁵²*Ibid.*, January 6, 1747.

our friends, the rabble saluted us with a few eggs and curses only." ⁵³

At Devizes Wesley met a furious mob. He says: "They began with ringing the bells backward and running to and fro in the streets, as lions roaring for their prey. . . . The chief gentleman of the town headed the mob, and the zealous curate, Mr. Innys, stood with them in the street the whole time, dancing for joy. . . . My own name I heard frequently repeated with, 'Bring him out, bring him out!' Their design was first to throw me into the horse-pond. They continued raging and threatening for the first hour, and pressed hard upon us to break the door. The windows they did break to pieces, and tore down the shutters of the shop." The mob then hurried away to the stable where the horses were. These they let loose. ⁵⁴ The next morning Wesley walked to a house and began preaching a little before the time appointed. Soon the boys with their bells began, and shortly after the whole army assaulted the house. After this they began playing a water engine, "which broke the windows, flooded the room, and spoiled the goods." "The rioters without continued playing their engine, which diverted them for some time, but their number and fierceness still increased, and the gentlemen plied them with pitchers of ale, as much as they would drink." They were on the point of breaking into the house, after a three hours' siege, when the proclamation against riots was read. This frightened them away, and the leaders of the mob became fearful lest the consequences might be more severe than they had planned. These men then began trying to quiet the rioters and to assist Wesley and his associates to escape, which, after much difficulty, was accomplished. But Wesley was so impressed with the seriousness of this riot that he says it was a day never to be forgotten. ⁵⁵

Wesley, accompanied by his wife and sister, reached Worcester in the afternoon. In the evening he preached. He says,

⁵³Charles Wesley, *Journal*, January 8, 1747.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, February 24, 1747.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, February 25, 1747.

“Almost as soon as I began the mob interrupted; but in spite of their lewd, hellish language, I preached the gospel, though with much contention.”⁵⁶ The next day he tried again to preach. Of this attempt he says: “We were hardly met when the sons of Belial poured in upon us, some with their faces blacked, some without shirts, all in rags. They began to ‘stand up for the church’ by cursing and swearing, by singing and talking lewdly, and throwing dust and dirt all over us, with which they had filled their pockets, such as had any to fill. I was soon covered from head to foot, and almost blinded.” Finding it impossible to be heard, Wesley retired upstairs. Afterward he walked through the mob to the mayor’s.⁵⁷

At Norwich, contrary to his design, he preached on a hill. He says: “The rioters were there in great numbers. I called them to repentance, but they stopped their ears, and ran upon me, casting stones, etc. I stood it for three quarters of an hour; but it was fighting with beasts.”⁵⁸

Charles Wesley was in Ireland during part of the disturbances there. He says: “At Dublin the popish mob, encouraged and assisted by the Protestant, is so insolent and outrageous, that whatever street we pass through it is up in arms.” He preached there, but he says: “None made disturbance till I had ended. Then the rabble attended us with the usual compliments to our lodgings.”⁵⁹ The next day he preached again, and says: “At five all was quiet within doors; but we had men, women, and children upon us as soon as we appeared in the streets. One I observed crying, ‘Swaddler, swaddler!’ . . . who was a young Ishmael indeed, and had not learned to speak. I am sure he could not be four years old.”⁶⁰ Wesley continued here for several days, and afterward returned several times without being injured, though at one time he and his friends were stoned

⁵⁶Charles Wesley, *Journal*, July 5, 1751.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, July 6, 1751.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, August 5, 1754.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, September 9, 1747.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, September 19, 1747.

for a street or two, and he received his first blow since coming to Dublin.⁶¹

Near Athlone he seems to have had rather a narrow escape, probably due to his company having reached the place before they were expected. As he and his friends were nearing the town they were met by a company of horsemen, who threw a volley of stones, knocking one of their number senseless from his horse. There were only five or six of this group, but they saw many gathering from all sides. They had collected a large pile of stones, any one of which was sufficient to beat out their brains. One struck Wesley in the back, which left him nearly breathless. He says: "The hedges were all lined with papists, who kept the field till they saw the dragoons coming out of Athlone. Then they took to their heels."⁶²

Thus, though always in ill health, and often confined to his home or to his bed for days at a time, Charles Wesley displayed a courage and a purpose as undaunted as the bravest and strongest of the Methodists. To flinch at the prospect of danger seems contrary to his nature.⁶³

⁶¹Charles Wesley, Journal, October 30, 1747.

⁶²Ibid., February 10, 1748.

⁶³NOTE—In some places the attitude toward Wesley seems to have been quite favorable. He says: "At Kinsale I am of every religion. The Presbyterians say I am a Presbyterian; the churchgoers, that I am a minister of theirs; and the Catholics are sure I am a good Catholic in my heart." (Charles Wesley, Journal, September 8, 1748.)

CHAPTER IV

GEORGE WHITEFIELD

THE Rev. George Whitefield was the great dramatic evangelist of the Methodist movement. He was by no means equal to John Wesley as a controversialist, nor was he as tactful in handling violent opposition. He made no pretensions at all to writing poetry. He was an amiable man, whose business it was to preach, and not to dispute. He was glad to enter any pulpit, dissenting or of the Establishment, and when these were refused he boldly took to the fields and streets. His sermons do not indicate the scholarship, nor show the force and logic of Wesley's. His power lay chiefly in a wonderful personality which flowed out to his audience freely and compassionately;¹ in the perfect grace of his form, and of his acting and gestures, and in his voice, which was unusually powerful and sweet, and over which he possessed a remarkable control. David Garrick, manager of the theater at Drury Lane, is reported to have said, "I would give a hundred guineas if I could only say 'Oh!' like Mr. Whitefield."² His faculties won for him the first place among pulpit orators of his day. Vast throngs crowded to hear him, met him on the way and followed him from the preaching place.³ His appeal was not alone to the poor, but the rich, the powerful, and the learned listened to him with delight. Among these were Lord Bolingbroke, who expressed approval; William Pitt, Charles

¹Southey, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 150.

²Tyerman, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 355.

³Southey, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, pp. 149ff.

NOTE—Benjamin Franklin estimated that in the open air on a calm day Whitefield could be distinctly heard by over thirty thousand people. (*Life of Franklin*, by himself, p. 119.)

Fox, Lord North, David Hume,⁴ Benjamin Franklin, and many others.⁵

Notwithstanding his generosity and kindly spirit, Whitefield was compelled to suffer bitter persecution, and on two occasions appears nearly to have lost his life. This, however, seems not to have daunted him any more than it did his co-laborers, the Wesleys.

As with the Wesleys, the opposition to him began by exclusion from the churches. One pulpit after another was denied him of which there is a long list, till in May, 1739, he says, "I believe we are the first professed ministers of England that were so soon, and without cause excluded every pulpit."⁶ This, however, failed, for Whitefield took to the fields. Then harsher methods were adopted.

In April, 1739, he visited a society at Oxford, at which some students were present. He desired them to behave quietly, which they did, but after the service they followed him to his inn, and entered his room uninvited. He gave them another exhortation, but some mocked.⁷ Two days later, after he had exhorted the society, the vice-chancellor of the university came to the house where the people were, and calling for Whitefield, said to him, "Have you, sir, . . . a name in any book here?" "Yes, sir," replied Whitefield, "but I intend to take it out soon." "Yes, and you had best take yourself out too," replied he, "or otherwise I will lay you by the heels."⁸ After some more words in which he threatened Whitefield in case he should come there again, the vice-chancellor went away.

The next month at Hitchen, Whitefield says: "I got upon

⁴NOTE—David Hume is reported to have expressed the following opinion concerning one of Whitefield's oratorical flights: "This address surpassed anything I ever saw or heard in any other preacher." (Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield*, vol. ii, p. 211.)

⁵Life of Countess of Huntingdon, vol. i, pp. 108, 210, 228; vol. ii, pp. 275ff.; Gillies *Memoirs*, p. 175, note.

⁶George Whitefield, *Journal*, p. 187.

⁷Ibid., pp. 168ff.

⁸Ibid.

a table in the market place, near the church; but some were pleased to ring the bells in order to disturb us. Upon this, not having begun, we removed to a most commodious place in the fields."⁹ Ringing the bells was repeated at Birmingham. He says, "Some unkind men, though they promised not to do so, rang the bells."¹⁰ However, Whitefield was not defeated in his efforts to preach.¹¹

At Tewkesbury he says, "I found the people much alarmed, and as soon as I was got into the inn, four constables came to attend me." A lawyer then demanded their warrant, which they could not produce. He then sent them away.¹² At Ulverston he says, "A clergyman, who looked more like a butcher than a minister, came with two others, and charged a constable with me; but I never saw a poor creature sent off with such disgrace."¹³

At Basingstoke Whitefield expounded in a large room. He says, "The place was very much thronged, but some were very noisy, and others threw up stones at the windows."¹⁴ And a few months later, as he was preaching in London, "some unhappy men came and pressed, and broke down the door."¹⁵ He was

⁹George Whitefield, *Journal*, p. 190.

¹⁰George Whitefield, *Works*, vol. ii, p. 48.

¹¹NOTE—The following incident is said to be quoted from Benjamin Franklin: "In the early part of his life, Mr. Whitefield was preaching in an open field, when a drummer happened to be present, who was determined to interrupt his pious business, and rudely beat his drum in a violent manner, in order to drown the preacher's voice. Mr. W. spoke very loud, but was not as powerful as the instrument; he therefore called out to the drummer in these words: 'Friend, you and I serve the two greatest masters existing, but in different callings—you beat up for volunteers for King George, and I for the Lord Jesus: in God's name, then, let us not interrupt each other; the world is wide enough for both, and we may get recruits in abundance.' This speech had such an effect on the drummer, that he went away in good humor, and left the preacher in full possession of the field." (*Life of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. ii, p. 277.)

¹²George Whitefield, *Journal*, p. 210.

¹³George Whitefield, *Works*, vol. ii, pp. 360ff.

¹⁴George Whitefield, *Journal*, p. 125.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 170ff.

back at Basingstoke ere long, and, being languid and weary, he lay down upon the bed, but he was there only a short time before the landlord notified him that he could not stay under his roof. He says, "I immediately rose and went to another inn; but the people made a mock of both me and my friends as we passed along, shot out their arrows, even bitter words, and fire-rockets were thrown about the door."¹⁶ This was continued till it was too late to preach. Later, however, he preached and received a blow from an opponent.¹⁷

Whitefield led the way to preaching in the Moorfields, a sort of public amusement park.¹⁸ At his second venture here merrymakers found the number of their attendants sadly lessened. He says, "You may easily guess that there was some noise among the craftsmen, and that I was honored with having a few stones, rotten eggs, and pieces of dead cats thrown at me." He had preached at noon, and had given notice that he would preach again at six in the evening. He says: "I came, I saw, but what thousands and thousands, . . . more than before, if possible, still more deeply engaged in their unhappy diversions; but some thousands among them waiting as earnestly to hear the gospel. This Satan could not brook. One of his choicest servants was exhibiting, trumpeting on a large stage; but as soon as the people saw me in my black robes and my pulpit, I think all to a man left him and ran to me. . . . God's people kept praying, and the enemy's agents made a kind of a roaring at some distance from our camp. At length they approached nearer, and the merry-andrew, attended by others, who complained that they had taken many pounds less that day on account of my preaching, got upon a man's shoulders, and advancing near the pulpit attempted to slash me with a long heavy whip several times, but always with the violence of his motion, tumbled down. Soon afterward they

¹⁶George Whitefield, *Journal*, pp. 218ff.

¹⁷George Whitefield, *Works*, vol. i, p. 54.

¹⁸NOTE—Whitefield says that the "Moorfields is a large spacious place, given as I have been told, by one Madam Moore, on purpose for all sorts of people to divert themselves." (*Works*, vol. i, p. 384.)

got a recruiting sergeant with his drum, etc., to pass through the congregation. . . . Finding these efforts to fail, a large body quite on the opposite side assembled together, and having got a large pole for their standard, advanced toward us with steady and formidable steps. . . . Just as they approached us with looks full of resentment, I know not by what accident, they quarreled among themselves, threw down their staff, and went their way.”¹⁹

A few days later, being invited by friends, he preached in another amusement place similar to the Moorfields, the Marylebone Fields. Here there seems to have been a vast assembly of opposers. He says: “Satan did not like thus to be attacked in his strongholds, and I narrowly escaped with my life; for as I was passing from the pulpit to my coach I felt my wig and hat to be almost off. I turned about and observed a sword just touching my temples. A young rake, as I afterwards found, was determined to stab me, but a gentleman, seeing the sword thrusting near me, struck it up with his cane, so the destined victim providentially escaped.”²⁰ This enraged the multitude, which turned upon the assailant, who narrowly escaped injury. “The next day,” he says, “I renewed my attack in Moorfields.” But here, after finding that pelting, noise, and threatenings would not do, one of the merry-andrews got into a tree and shamefully exposed himself. Whitefield says, “I must own at first it gave me a shock; I thought Satan had now almost outdone himself; but recovering my spirits, I appealed to all, since now they had such a spectacle before them, whether I had wronged human nature in saying, after pious Bishop Hall, ‘that man, when left to himself, is half devil and half a beast.’”²¹

At Hampton, where there had been severe rioting, Whitefield encountered the mob. He says they had threatened “that, if ever I came there again, they would have a piece of my black gown to make aprons with. No sooner had I entered the town

¹⁹George Whitefield, Works, vol. i, p. 385.

²⁰Ibid., vol. i, p. 187.

²¹Ibid., vol. i, p. 188.

but I saw and heard the signals, such as blowing of horns, and ringing of bells for gathering the mob. My soul was kept quite easy. I preached in a large grass plat . . . and, as it happened, I finished my sermon and pronounced the blessing just as the ringleader of the mob broke in upon us, which I soon perceived disappointed and grieved them very much. One of them, as I was coming down from the table, called me coward; but I told him they should hear from me another way. I went into the house, and preached upon the staircase to a large number of serious souls, but these real troublers of Israel soon came in to mock and mob us. But feeling what I never felt before, . . . I leaped downstairs, and all ran away before me. However, they continued making a noise about the house till midnight, abusing the poor people as they went home, and, as we hear, they broke one young lady's arm in two places."²²

At Plymouth in 1744 Whitefield suffered a very severe attack. When he reached the place several broke into the room where he lodged at the inn and disturbed him. He then sought private lodgings. While here, he says, "the good woman of the house came and told me that a well-dressed gentleman desired to speak with me. Imagining that it was some Nicodemite, I desired he might be brought up. He came and sat down by my bedside, told me he was a lieutenant of a man of war, congratulated me on the success of my ministry, and expressed himself much concerned for being detained from hearing me. He then asked me, if I knew him. I answered, 'No.' He replied his name was Cadogan. I rejoined that I had seen one Mr. Cadogan, who was formerly an officer at Georgia, about a fortnight ago at Bristol. Upon this he immediately rose up, uttering the most abusive language, calling me dog, rogue, villain, etc., and beat me most unmercifully with his gold-headed cane. . . . Being apprehensive that he intended to shoot or stab me, I underwent all the fears of a sudden violent death. . . . My hostess and her daughter, hearing me cry murder, rushed into

²²George Whitefield, Works, vol. ii, pp. 35ff.

the room, and seized him by the collar. However, he immediately disengaged himself from them, and repeated his blows upon me." The cry of murder having been repeated, the assailant took fright and escaped.²³

It seems that an assault was planned to have been made earlier in the evening, but the man who was to do the deed, having been civilly treated by Whitefield, had not the heart to make the attack. Upon hearing this, the assailant made a wager of ten guineas that he would do the deed.²⁴

During the pamphlet attacks upon the Methodists by Bishop Lavington, Whitefield boldly entered Exeter, his Episcopal residence, and preached, but not without some inconvenience. He says: "I preached twice at Exeter, and in the evening I believe I had near ten thousand hearers. The Bishop and several of his clergy stood very near me, as I am informed. A good season it was. All was quiet, and there was a great solemnity in the congregation, but a drunken man threw at me three great stones. One of them cut my head deeply, and was like to knock me off the table; but . . . I was not discomposed at all."²⁵

Whitefield relates a couple of incidents concerning himself as rather minor affairs. He preached twice at Totherham. He says: "The crier was employed to give notice of a bear-baiting. Your ladyship may guess who was the bear. About seven in the morning the drum was heard, and several watermen attended it with great staves. The constable was struck, and two of the mobbers were apprehended, but rescued afterward."²⁶ When it had become quiet Whitefield left the town. A second disturbance was at Wrexham. He says: "Upon my coming that town was alarmed, and several thousand came to hear. Several of the baser sort made a great noise, and threw stones, but none touched me."²⁷ Another was at Nantwich, "where a Methodist

²³George Whitefield, Works, vol. ii, p. 59, Letter No. 551.

²⁴Ibid., vol. ii, p. 61, Letter No. 552.

²⁵Ibid., vol. ii, p. 287, Letter No. 775.

²⁶Ibid., vol. ii, p. 354, Letter No. 840.

²⁷Ibid., vol. iii, pp. 34ff., Letter No. 997.

meetinghouse hath lately been pulled down. Here Satan roared. The mob pelted Mr. D—— and others much, but I got off pretty free.”²⁸

In London Whitefield had a preaching place called Long-acre Chapel. His presence here occasioned much resentment.²⁹ The Bishop of B—— sent to him prohibiting his preaching at this place.³⁰ This began a rather lengthy correspondence. The Bishop seems to have shielded himself with threats, under the privileges of a peer to deter Whitefield from publishing his letters.³¹ However, from Whitefield’s correspondence it seems that, when he preached, there was a great disturbance in the house or yard of one Mr. Cope, which was adjacent to the chapel. Whitefield says it was more than noise, “It deserves no milder name than premeditated rioting. Drummers, soldiers, and many of the baser sort have been hired by subscription. A copper-furnace, bells, drums, clappers, marrow-bones, and cleavers, and such like instruments of reformation have been provided for and made use of by them repeatedly from the moment I have begun preaching to the end of my sermon. By these horrid noises many women have been almost frightened to death, and mobbers encouraged thereby to come and riot at the chapel door during the time of divine service, and then insult and abuse me and the congregation after it hath been over. Not content with this, the chapel windows, while I have been preaching, have repeatedly been broken by large stones of almost a pound weight, some now lying by me, which though leveled at, providentially missed me, but at the same time sadly wounded some of my hearers.”³² It was understood by Whitefield that Mr. Cope in whose premises this disturbance was made, was the Bishop’s overseer,³³ and that

²⁸George Whitefield, Works.

²⁹Gillies, *Memoirs of George Whitefield*, pp. 215ff.

NOTE—This was in the neighborhood of the playhouses. (Gillies, *Memoirs of George Whitefield*, pp. 215ff.)

³⁰George Whitefield, Works, vol. iii, pp. 257ff., Letters No. 1119-1124.

³¹Ibid., Letter No. 1124.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., vol. iii, p. 168, Letter No. 1124.

some of the disturbers belonged to the Bishop's vestry.³⁴ Mr. Whitefield threatened to apply to the courts for justice unless the disturbances ceased. Shortly after this he received three anonymous letters, "threatening a certain, sudden and unavoidable stroke unless I desist from preaching, and pursuing the offenders by law."³⁵ Thereupon he appealed to the government, and the King promised a pardon to any that would reveal the writers of the letters.³⁶ He does not tell how the matter finally ended. However, notwithstanding the threatenings, he continued to preach, and was inclined to think that it was best to accept the advice of his friends to bring the rioters to the King's Bench for trial.³⁷

Perhaps Whitefield's most serious encounter with the mob was in Ireland. Of this incident the Gentleman's Magazine says that he barely escaped with his life.³⁸ He had preached on Sunday afternoon at Oxminton-Green, a large place like the Moorfields, to a vast multitude. There was not much molestation, he says: "Only now and then a few stones and clods of dirt were thrown at me. It being war time, . . . after sermon I prayed for success to the Prussian arms. All being over, I thought to return home the way I came, but, to my great surprise, access was denied, so that I had to go near half a mile from one end of the green to the other, through hundreds and hundreds of papists, etc. Finding me unattended, for a soldier and four Methodist preachers, who came with me, had forsook me and fled, I was left to their mercy. . . . Volleys of hard stones came from all quarters, and every step I took a fresh stone struck, and made me reel backward and forward till I was almost breathless, and all over a gore of blood. My strong beaver hat served me as it were for a scull cap for a while; but at last that was knocked off, and my head left quite defenseless. I

³⁴George Whitefield, Works, Letter No. 1120.

³⁵Ibid., Letter No. 1133.

³⁶Ibid., Letter No. 1134; Tyerman, Life of George Whitefield, vol. ii, p. 367.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Gentleman's Magazine, 1757, p. 334.

received many blows and wounds; one was particularly large and near my temples. . . . A minister's house lay next to the green; with great difficulty I staggered to the door, which was kindly opened to, and shut upon me. . . . For a while I continued speechless, panting for and expecting every breath to be my last; two or three of the hearers, my friends, by some means or other got admission, and kindly with weeping eyes washed my bloody wounds, and gave me something to smell, and to drink. I gradually revived." The lady of the house now wished Whitefield to be gone, for she feared the house would be pulled down. He therefore went out, was taken into a coach, which friends had just brought, and escaped. A surgeon dressed his wounds, after which he went to the preaching place and joined with the society in thanksgiving for his deliverance.³⁹

Thus he toiled, suffering almost daily reproach,⁴⁰ and sometimes, as has been shown, extreme violence. By his arduous labors he wore himself out and filled rather an early grave, dying in 1770. His body does not rest in the vault which he had prepared at Tottenham Court Chapel, and as he intended, but in America,⁴¹ which he visited seven times, and where he died.

³⁹George Whitefield, Works, vol. iii, p. 207, Letter No. 1170.

⁴⁰Ibid., Letter No. 1119.

⁴¹Tyerman, Life of George Whitefield, vol. ii, p. 373.

CHAPTER V

THE LAY PREACHERS AND THE PERSECUTORS

NATURALLY, the violence, as well as the antipathy of the mobs, was directed most severely against the preachers of this hated doctrine. Very often they were the chief objects of attack, and frequently they preached with the blood running down their faces, caused by the missiles and blows which they had received.¹ Many of them suffered intensely; some were injured for life; a few died from their wounds, while all endured the general persecution.

At the beginning of his career, in 1735, Howell Harris was not in any way identified with the Methodists.² Indeed, his work began before Methodism was known throughout the land, yet, later the name came to be applied to him.³ His field of action was chiefly Wales. In 1736, at the request of many friends, he opened a school at Trevecka. This was broken up in 1737, and because of persecution was never re-established. Moreover, his pupils were turned out of the parish church.⁴

At Pont-y-Pool, in 1739, Mr. Harris was arrested, but released on bail. He went to the court in August, but as many of his friends had appeared for him, the magistrates, upon consultation, thought it best that the case be dropped. By this time, however, he had become intimate with the Methodists. Whitefield met him in March of this year, and notes that "many ale-house people, fiddlers, harpers, etc. (Demetrius like), sadly cry

¹Arminian Magazine, 1780, p. 511.

²Association of Aberystwyth and Bala, History of Calvinistic Methodism in Wales, pp. 3ff.

³NOTE—Mr. Harris must have known of the Methodists, and of their customs, as he had been at Oxford for a short time in 1735.

⁴John Bulmer, Memoirs of the Life of Howell Harris, pp. 10ff.

out against him for spoiling their business. He has been made the subject of numbers of sermons, has been threatened with public prosecution, and had constables sent to apprehend him. But God has blessed him with inflexible courage, and he still continues to go on from conquering to conquer.”⁵

At Cowbridge, in 1740, Mr. Harris met with Mr. William Seward, “with whom he traveled and preached in the towns of Newport, Caerleon, Usk, and Monmouth.” At Newport the mob rushed upon them with the utmost fury. They tore the sleeves of his coat—one of them off—and pelted him with apples, dirt, and stones. At Caerleon the mob pelted him with dung and dirt, and threw eggs, plum-stones, and other hard substances in his face. Mr. Seward received a blow on the right eye which destroyed its sight. For a few days this affected the other eye, so that he had to be led about by the hand. At Monmouth they both were pelted with apples, pears, stones, and a dead dog.⁶

The honor of being the proto-martyr fell to Mr. Seward. After suffering such bitter persecution in so many places, as just mentioned, at last, at Hay he received a blow on the head from the effect of which in a few days he died October 22, 1740. His untimely death was a severe shock, and a cause of profound sadness to his fellow evangelists.⁷

This year also brought another arrest. In Radnorshire Mr. Harris was apprehended by two justices, and released on bail. This case also was dismissed.⁸

The next year he met a mob at Bala in Merionethshire, which threatened him with death. He was pelted with dirt and stones and struck in the face by a man’s fist. He finally fell under their feet, whereupon he was beaten till one of the mob,

⁵George Whitefield, *Journal*, March 7, 1739.

⁶J. Bulmer, *Memoirs of Howell Harris*, pp. 23ff.

⁷Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield*, vol. i, p. 167; G. Holden Pike, *John Wesley and His Mission*, p. 77; John Wesley, *Journal*, October 27, 1740; Charles Wesley, *Journal*, October 28, 1740.

⁸J. Bulmer, *Memoirs of Howell Harris*, pp. 25ff.

either from pity or fear of being prosecuted for killing him, rescued him. At Penmorfa and at Llanbrynmair his life was in danger.⁹

In 1742 Mr. Harris started to London in company with Mr. Cennick. At Swindon the mob assaulted them with horns, guns, and a fire engine. One presented a gun to Mr. Harris's forehead; another struck him on the mouth, bringing blood, yet they were not dismayed.¹⁰

A little later in his career he says that "the gentlemen in part of Brecknockshire and Carmarthenshire hunt us like part-ridges, but still the work prospers."¹¹ He also gives the following account of his work in Wales: "Are you surprised at my silence? Could you but take a turn with me for two or three months and see my labors and trials, your surprise would cease. However, I will inform you that it is now about nine weeks since I began to go round South and North Wales, and this week return home. I have visited in all that time thirteen counties, traveled about one hundred and fifty miles every week, and discoursed twice a day, occasionally three or four times. In this last journey I have not taken off my clothes for seven nights together, being obliged to meet the people and discourse at midnight, or very early in the morning to avoid persecution. . . . Near the town of Bala, where I was formerly like to be murdered, I had a severe blow on my head,"¹² etc. In 1747 he began a ten days' trip through North Wales in which he thought his life in constant danger, expecting either imprisonment or death.¹³

Thomas Lewis was mobbed at Cainson, in Somersetshire. He was pelted with clods, stones, old shoes, and balls of clay, while one was ringing a bell, others cursing and swearing, or hallooing and firing off guns. He received a blow on the breast

⁹John Bulmer, *Memoirs of Howell Harris*, pp. 25ff.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 38ff.

¹¹*Life and Times of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. i, pp. 109ff.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Christian History*, p. 99, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. xli.

that pained him much; one of his arms was benumbed, and a severe blow on the side of the face caused extended swelling, and nearly disabled him.¹⁴

At Cleethorpes Mr. Capiter was tarred and rolled in feathers, and several times put in the stocks for preaching. On one occasion a hive of bees was thrown among his hearers.¹⁵

Morgan Hughes was imprisoned in Wales for exhorting.¹⁶ At Salisbury Plain, as soon as the preacher, John Furz, began to speak, a man went forward and presented a gun to his face, and swore that, if he spoke another word, he would blow his brains out. The preacher continued speaking, and the man continued swearing, sometimes placing the muzzle of the gun to the preacher's mouth, or to his ear. He finally fired the gun behind him, and burned off part of his hair. For this, however, the persecutor was so roughly handled by the mob that he kept his bed for several weeks.¹⁷

Early in 1745 Mr. Thomas Adams went to Exeter, where he preached a number of times. Opposition began, but at first was unsuccessful.¹⁸ The rioters tried to turn the fire engine upon the congregation, but could not bring the water to reach them. At last one of their own number turned the water upon the persecutors, many of whom received an unexpected bath. Another man knocked down the engineer by a blow on the head. However, the opposition was not thus easily quieted. After preaching one morning two constables took Mr. Adams to prison, where he was kept for about five hours. That afternoon the Methodists were attacked by a mob, who beat and insulted men and women. In his efforts to protect the women one man was so bruised that he was obliged to keep his bed for some time. Mr. Adams was pelted through the street, smeared all over with mud and dirt, and with all the "nastiness that the kennel

¹⁴The Christian History, vol. vii, pp. 33ff.

¹⁵George Lester, Grimsley Methodism, p. 49.

¹⁶Christian History, vol. vii, No. 3, pp. 66ff.

¹⁷Life of J. Furz, by himself, Jackson's Lives, vol. v, pp. 125ff.

¹⁸The Christian History, vol. vii, No. 3, pp. 52ff.

afforded." The next night he was called before the mayor and insulted. As he left the mayor's house the mob again attacked and followed him. When he escaped them he was nearly ready to fall from bruises and exhaustion.¹⁹

The case of John Nelson presents another instance of the same nature. He was an early convert and became a powerful assistant to Wesley. His courage was undaunted, and his character inflexible, as will be seen from the following incidents :

The first time he stood in the street to preach he was struck on the head with an egg and two potatoes, but he says "that neither hindered me from speaking, nor them from hearing." Shortly after this he appealed to the consciences of his hearers, that he had not spoken his own words, but the words of the Lord, and a gentleman replied, "We allow all you say is true, yet you deserve to be set in the stocks for delivering it in the street."²⁰

At Grimsby he was forced to prove the mettle of which he was made. The minister went through the town ahead of a drummer and "gathered all the rabble he could," and gave them liquor to go with him "to fight for the church." After Mr. Nelson had finished preaching this rabble broke every window in the house, and abused the people as they went out. But soon some of the persecutors began to fight their fellows for abusing the women, during which most of the people escaped.²¹

At Nottingham a few had prepared squibs which they intended to throw in his face, but three of them were burned with the fire that they had intended for him, so went away.²² At Bristol, while he was speaking a man came up behind him and filled his mouth with dirt, which nearly caused him to choke. However, he cleared his mouth and continued to speak.²³

He says: "When I left Bristol I met with many sufferings, At almost every place where I came to preach mobs were raised,

¹⁹The Christian History, vol. vii, No. 3, pp. 26ff.

²⁰John Nelson, Journal, p. 80.

²¹Ibid., p. 92.

²²Ibid., p. 163.

²³Ibid., p. 164.

as if they were determined to kill me, and all God's children, in a kind of thanksgiving because the rebels were conquered." At Nottingham, about April, 1746, he was arrested and taken before an alderman, who said to him, "I wonder you can't stay in your own places; you might be convinced by this time that the mob of Nottingham will never let you preach quietly in this town." Mr. Nelson replied: "I beg pardon, sir. I did not know before now that this town was governed by a mob; for most towns are governed by magistrates." However, after some conversation, the alderman ordered the constable, who brought him, to go with him and take him back to the place from which he had been taken.²⁴ At Kirk-Heaton he learned that nearly the whole town had agreed that as soon as the next "Methodist dog" came, all the journeymen and apprentices should leave work, "put a halter about his neck and drag him into the river and drown him, that the town might be quit of them forever." The parson's son was the captain of the mob. They were thwarted in their purpose by a constable, who came along and delivered him from them.²⁵

But his greatest suffering from the mob was in the neighborhood of Hepworth-moor, Easter Sunday, 1747. He had preached there on the previous Friday, and attempted to preach again on Sunday. But the mob came, stood still for a time, till a gentleman, so called, cried out, "Knock out the brains of that mad dog." An immediate shower of stones drove his audience from him. As he got down and was leaving the place he was struck on the back of the head with a piece of a brick, which knocked him flat on his face, and senseless. Two men lifted him up and led him away between them, but for some time he could not stand alone. The blood ran down his back into his shoes. The mob followed him, threatening to kill him when they got him out of the town. A gentleman saw him, and took him into his house and sent for a surgeon, who dressed his wound. The mob

²⁴John Nelson, *Journal*, pp. 166ff.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 181ff.

surrounded the house, but the gentleman threatened them, so they dispersed.

He lay down for a while, then a Mr. Slaton brought him his horse. He rode to Ackham, where he was to have preached at five in the afternoon. But just at that time "there came about ten young gentlemen, some in the coach, some on the box, and behind the coach, who began to sing the songs of the drunkards, and to throw rotten eggs at the women."

He was in a field near the house when a man, hired for the purpose, threw him down, and leaped upon his abdomen several times with his knees, till he had beaten the breath out of him, and set his head to bleeding again. The brutal persecutor declared that he had killed the preacher, then taking another Methodist, he threw him against the corner of a wall and broke two of his ribs.²⁶

About twenty went to Mr. Nelson to see whether he was dead, but his breath had come again, he had turned on his face, and lay bleeding upon the ground. They lifted him up, and said that they would help him to the house. As soon as he could speak he said: "Your mercy is only to make way for more cruelty. Gentlemen, if I have done any thing contrary to the law, let me be punished by the law. I am a subject to King George, and to his law I appeal; and I am willing to go before my Lord Mayor, as he is the King's magistrate." But they cursed him and the King too, and said that the King was as bad as the Methodists, or he would have hanged them all like dogs before then. One cursed the King, and said that if he were there, they would treat him as they had served the preacher.²⁷

When he got into the street he was knocked down eight times. And as he lay on the ground, not able to get up, they dragged him by the hair of his head upon the stones for nearly twenty yards, kicking him on the sides and thighs as they went

²⁶John Nelson, *Journal*, pp. 184ff; also John Wesley, *Journal*, April 20, 1747.

²⁷*Ibid.*

along. Then six of them stood on his body and thighs in order to "tread the Holy Ghost out of him." After a time some friends got him into the house. The mob set out for the city singing debauched songs. Mr. Nelson heard one of them say, "It is impossible for him to live."²⁸ But he did live, and labored on till his death in July, 1774. His remains were carried through the streets of Leeds, attended by thousands, who were "either weeping or singing."²⁹

Christopher Hopper was another of Wesley's early assistants. He says: "I met with great persecution, many discouragements, and much opposition in every place." Men of all ranks used their power and influence to stop this work of God. "They dispensed with two or three awakened clergymen tolerably well. These were regularly ordained men of learning, gentlemen and divines. But to see a plowman or an honest mechanic stand up to preach the gospel, it was insufferable." "Laymen and ecclesiasts joined heart and hand to suppress these pestilent fellows, not with acts of kindness, scripture, or reason, but by invectives and lies, dirt, rotten eggs, brickbats, stones, and cudgels." "It was the common cry in town and country, 'Press them for soldiers; send them on board a man of war; transport them; beat them; stone them; send them to prison, or knock their brains out, and dispatch them at once, for there is no law for them.'"³⁰

The rector at Ryton and his curate tried to stop him. They gave him first hard words, then hard blows, but without avail. He was summoned before the Spiritual Court at Durham to answer for his conduct, but friends were raised up for him.³¹

At another time he was traveling with Wesley, who had preached in a field at Durham in the morning, and Mr. Hopper preached in the same field in the evening. "A gentleman, so called, employed a base man to strip himself naked and swim

²⁸John Nelson, *Journal*, pp. 184ff.

²⁹*Methodist Magazine*, 1788, pp. 573ff.

³⁰*Memoirs of Christopher Hopper*, pp. 15ff., Osborn Collection of Pamphlets.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 19.

through the river to disturb the hearers; but a good woman soon hissed him off the stage, so he was glad to return by the way he came with much disgrace.”³²

Wesley tells us that the first who preached at Colne was John Jane, who was innocently riding through the town, when “the jealous mob pulled him off his horse and put him in the stocks. He seized the opportunity, and vehemently exhorted them to flee from the wrath to come.”³³

Thomas Mitchell says that “one evening while William Darney was preaching at Yeadon in the parish of Guiseley the curate of Guiseley came at the head of a large mob, who threw eggs in his face, pulled him down, dragged him out of the house on the ground, and stamped upon him.”³⁴

Some time after Mr. Darney’s sufferings, Mr. Jonathan Maskew followed him at Yeadon. The same mob pulled him down and dragged him out of the house. “They then tore off his clothes, and dragged him along upon his naked back over the gravel and pavement. When they thought they had sufficiently bruised him they let him go.” “With much difficulty he crept to a friend’s house, where they dressed his wounds and got him some clothes.”³⁵

It was Mr. Thomas Mitchell’s turn to go next. His friends advised him not to preach, and undertook to take him out of the town, but the mob followed him, and stoned him for nearly two miles. It took him several weeks to recover from his bruises.

On Sunday, August 7, 1751, Mr. Mitchell preached at Rangdale at five in the morning. About six o’clock two constables went at the head of the mob, seized the preacher and took him to a public house, where they kept him till four in the afternoon. At this time the constable took him out to the mob, who hurried him away to a pool of standing water and threw

³²Memoirs of Christopher Hopper, p. 33, Osborn Collection of Pamphlets.

³³John Wesley, Journal, April 30, 1776.

³⁴Thomas Mitchell, Short Account of Himself, p. 8, Osborn Collection, vol. xii.

³⁵Ibid., p. 8, Osborn Collection, vol. xii; also Life of J. Maskew, Jackson’s Lives, vol. iv, p. 209.

him in. The water was up to his neck, but they compelled him to cross it seven times before they would allow him to come out. Then one stood ready with a pot of white paint, with which he covered him from head to foot. They then took him back to the public house for a time, after which they took him to another pond ten or twelve feet deep, and railed in all around. Here four men took him by his legs and arms, swung him back and forth several times and threw him into the pond. The fall and the shock left him senseless, so that he felt nothing more. Some of them, however, were not willing to let him drown, so, watching till he rose to the surface, they caught his clothes with a long pole, and dragged him out. After some time he regained consciousness, and saw two men standing by him, one of whom helped him up, and took him to a house where he was put to bed. But it was not long before the mob returned, pulled him out of bed, and carried him into the street, swearing that they would take away one of his limbs unless he would promise not to go there any more. He replied, "I can promise no such thing." But the man that had hold of him promised for him, and took him back into the house, and put him to bed again. The minister told the mob that they must take him out of the parish, so they went and pulled him out of bed a second time. His clothes were wet and covered with paint, so they put an old coat about him, took him about a mile and left him on a little hill. No one dared to help him because of the mob. He remembered some friends three or four miles away, and though he was scarcely able to stand, yet in time he reached this refuge. He says: "I rested four days with them, in which time my strength was tolerably restored. Then I went into the circuit, where I met with more persecution." In one of these later persecutions the mob took him by the heels and dragged him on his back for about half a mile.³⁶

Mr. John Haime joined the army in 1739. He became a Methodist, and began to preach in 1744. He was ridiculed by

³⁶Thomas Mitchell, *Short Account of Himself*, p. 12, Osborn Collection, vol. xii; also *Methodist Magazine*, 1802, p. 463.

the men, but with the exception of General Sinclaire, all the commanders protected him, consequently, as a soldier, he suffered no violence. After receiving his discharge from the army he continued to preach, and now received his share of hardship. In 1748 he was arrested, and two men swore falsely that he had made a riot. The town clerk told him that they would not send him to jail, if he would work a miracle. He replied that miracles were wrought already in that many swearers and drunkards had become sober and God-fearing men. He was then told that, if he would cease to preach, he would not be imprisoned. This he refused to do, and was confined for eight days, till the court convened. Help having now come from a wealthy man in London, the officers thought it best to drop the case, so let him go.³⁷

In 1751 Thomas Lee was mobbed at Pately-Bridge, and pelted with mud, stones, and blows till he staggered to and fro. A heavy blow on the head with a stone caused him considerable trouble.³⁸ The next year he says, "persecution raged on every side," and was chiefly directed against himself. One day as he was passing through Pately the captain of the mob, "who was kept in constant pay," pursued him, and pulled him off his horse. The mob then collected, dragged him by the hair of his head, then pushed him back with one or two upon him, and threw him with the small of the back against the stone stairs, which injured his back so that it was not well for many years afterward. They then dragged him to the common sewer, which carried the dirt from the town, and rolled him in it for some time. After this they dragged him to the bridge and threw him into the water. They then disputed whether to leave him, or make an end of him. However, their attention having been attracted in another direction, they left him lying upon the ground. His wife went to him, and finally succeeded in getting him on his horse, and out

³⁷A Short Account of John Haime, by himself, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. cclxx; also in Jackson's Lives.

³⁸Experiences of Methodist Preachers (Wills Register, p. 95), Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. xiv.

of the town. During this entire summer, autumn, and winter, he says, "were times of hot persecution."³⁹

In 1760 he was stationed at Epworth. A favorite method with the mob was to fill egg shells with blood, and seal them with pitch, and throw them at the preacher. The shells, of course, would break, and the blood stream down his clothes. The Epworth mob treated Mr. Lee with this sort of an attack. He says these blood-filled eggs "made strange work wherever they lighted." After this abuse, he was summoned before the mayor, and then left to the mob, who pelted him with mud, clods, and stones, and beat him till, again, he was barely able to stand, and covered him with paint. They had offered to let him go, if he would promise never to come there again, but this he "could not do," for both his rights as an Englishman and his duty as a Christian forbade such a promise.⁴⁰

In his journeys in 1754 Mr. Thomas Hanby went to the home of a Mr. Thomas Thompson, who kept the tollgate about a half mile from Ashburn. He remained here a few days and preached morning and evening to as many as the house would hold. About two weeks later he returned, but this time found that he could not preach any more in the tollgate house, for the commissioners of the road had forbidden Mr. Thompson to admit him. A gentleman farmer, however, allowed him to preach in his house. Here a mob assembled, and attacked the house with the purpose of assaulting the preacher. He escaped them, having been defended by friends, whom he afterward saw bleeding among the mob.⁴¹

During the same year he stopped at one of the principal inns at Leek, and ordered dinner. But before it was ready a mob collected about the inn. The landlord went to Mr. Hanby in much excitement, and entreated him to leave the place immediately, lest his house should be pulled down, and Mr. Hanby

³⁹Experiences of Methodist Preachers (Wills Register, pp. 96ff.), Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. xiv.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Experiences of Methodist Preachers, p. 77, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. xiv.

murdered. Consequently, he mounted his horse in the yard and rode through the mob, who pelted him with a shower of dirt and stones, while they cried, "Kill him! Kill him!"⁴²

After some time he went again to Leek, stayed ten days, and received twenty-four into the society. This time a lawyer raised a mob, which attacked the house where he lodged. They broke into the house, and soon would have had their victim, but a neighboring woman opened a window in her house, where he hid till two o'clock in the morning, then made his escape out of the town over the mountains. The mob, being disappointed at losing their victim, the next day burned him in effigy.⁴³

From this time there was no more preaching at Leek till the leading men of the mob had died or had joined the army.

At Burton-upon-Trent he had preached in a large house belonging to a shoemaker, and had gone a second time to preach, when a mob assembled, which, as Mr. Hanby afterward learned, had been hired and made drunk for the occasion by the leading persons of the town. They began by breaking the shutters and windows of the house. The head of this mob was a forgerman, "half an idiot," who had bound himself under an oath that he "would have the preacher's liver." He brought the pipe of a large bellows, with which he made a frightful noise, and Mr. Hanby says, "which was to be the instrument of my death." He made what way he could toward the preacher, being retarded by the crowd. The preacher observed him appearing "with the fury of a fiend." Consequently, he withdrew to an upper chamber, then to a shoemaker's shop. The mob searched the chamber, and finally the shop, where they found him. They hurried him into the house; a man, who had been made drunk for the occasion, approached him, but suddenly changed his purpose, and instead of abusing him, defended him. As the mob did not know his purpose, he led the preacher through it, till he got him to the edge of the crowd, when he told him to run. Now began a foot race in

⁴²Experiences of Methodist Preachers, p. 79, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. xiv.

⁴³Ibid., p. 82.

earnest. His deliverer kept behind him, to keep off the mob, and he being one of the best pugilists of the town no one dared to attack him, so that the preacher escaped.⁴⁴

In concluding this account Mr. Hanby says: "In weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in joy and sorrow, in weakness and in trembling, were my days now spent. . . . I was surrounded with death, and could seldom expect to survive another day because of the fury of the people. And yet, it was 'woe unto thee, if thou preach not the gospel.'" ⁴⁵

Peter Jaco gives his experiences in a few words as follows: "At Warrington I was struck so violently with a brick on the breast that the blood gushed out through my mouth, nose, and ears. At Grampound I was pressed for a soldier, kept under a strong guard for several days without meat or drink, but what I was obliged to procure at a large expense; and threatened to have my feet tied under the horse's belly, while I was carried eight miles before the commissioners, and though I was honorably acquitted by them, yet it cost me a pretty large sum of money as well as much trouble."⁴⁶

At one time John Leech was preaching in the open at a workhouse, when a gentleman, so called, rode up and asked him, "Who ordered you to come here?" Mr. Leech replied, "The governor of the workhouse." The gentleman then said that he paid the most money for the support of the house, "and you shall not preach here." He then struck him several times on the head with his cane and rode away. Mr. Leech then finished his sermon.⁴⁷

In 1757 Alexander Mather had a hard experience with the mob. He had previously preached in a field at Boston, Lincolnshire, with comparative quietness. At his next visit he attempted

⁴⁴Experiences of Methodist Preachers, pp. 79-80, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. xiv; also John Pawson, Sermon on Death of J. Hanby, Osborn Collection, vol. vi, class 20.

⁴⁵Experiences of Methodist Preachers, p. 82, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. xiv.

⁴⁶Jackson's Lives, vol. i, p. 264.

⁴⁷Methodist Magazine, 1812, p. 164.

to preach in the market place, but the mob prevented. They dispersed the congregation with noise and missiles. The preacher and friends started to leave the place, but no sooner had they turned their back than a hail of stones and dirt flew about them on every side. After walking some distance they thought it best to face the mob and, if possible, get back to their horses. In this effort Mr. Mather became separated from his friends, was tripped up, received a violent fall and many blows. He recovered his breath, but was tripped up again, followed, and plastered with dirt. A gentleman prevented them from throwing him into a pond, which he passed, but as soon as he reached the street, some got the dirt out of the kennels and threw it in his face. As he proceeded farther, he received a blow from a stone on the temple. Shortly after this he reached the inn, into which the mob did not follow. He was bruised almost from head to foot. His friends washed his wounds, and when he became cold he was so stiff that he could hardly stir. He says, "It was a full year before I quite recovered from the hurts, which I then received."⁴⁸

In 1763 a preaching house was built at Wolverhampton, but shortly afterward was demolished by the mob. Rioting had reigned for so long that it was difficult for a Methodist to pass through the streets. The mob had broken the windows of the homes, and threatened to destroy every preaching house near them. General excitement and fear prevailed. They were to begin at Darlaston, but at this place a butcher with his clever frightened them away. Also sentiment here against such outrages had become sufficiently strong to discourage them. However, at Wolverhampton there still was trouble enough.⁴⁹

A warrant was taken out against the rioters, but the justices acquitted them all. "This gave them fresh spirits, so they hastened home with ribbons flying, and were saluted with bells and bonfires," in one of which revels they burned the preacher in effigy.

⁴⁸Arminian Magazine, 1780, pp. 149ff.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 157ff.

The Methodists now found it still more dangerous to enter the town, or even to get to their own homes.⁵⁰

At this juncture Mr. Mather waited upon Lord D—— with a Mr. Hayes, an attorney, who had been the leader of the mob that destroyed the preaching-house, and who himself had made the first break in the house. At that time this was a capital crime, punishable by death. Mr. Hayes was plainly told that either he must rebuild the house, or be tried for his life. He rebuilt the house. This was a very effective lesson to the other rioters, who, from henceforth, were quiet.⁵¹

John Pawson seems fortunately to have escaped without much bodily injury. In Beverly, where the magistrate refused to punish the rioters, disturbances were frequent, which made preaching difficult or impossible. Complaint was made against three young men who had been guilty of much disturbance, but instead of punishing these the mayor and alderman, before whom they were brought, threatened to indict Mr. Pawson for perjury and to send him to York castle. But when he convinced them that he had not made any oath at all, they grew calmer, and allowed him to withdraw.⁵²

In 1764 he was removed to Norwich, where, he says, “during the winter, we had almost continual mobbing. The rioters frequently broke the windows, interrupted us in preaching, and abused the people when service was ended.”⁵³ They complained to the mayor, who would not punish the disturbers, which encouraged them, and led them to commit greater outrages. Mr. Pawson says, “None of them [the magistrates] would go a step farther than they were obliged for fear of being persecuted themselves.”⁵⁴

The following is quoted from the Gentleman’s Magazine: “A terrible riot happened at Kingston in Surrey, occasioned by

⁵⁰Arminian Magazine, 1780, pp. 149ff.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid., 1779, p. 37.

⁵³Ibid., 1779, p. 38.

⁵⁴Jackson’s Lives, vol. iv, p. 29.

a Methodist preacher, who came there and brought a great number of people together in a barn to hear him. While he was preaching a fellow threw some dirt at him, which made a great disturbance, and the mob at last dragged the preacher into the street and rolled him in a ditch; and had it not been for the humanity of a gentleman near the spot, who took him into his house, he, in all likelihood, would have been murdered. Some of the Enniskillen dragoons being among the mob, with their swords, wounded several of the people, and put the whole town in alarm. But by the prudent behavior of their commanding officer, all ill consequence was prevented. He ordered the drums to beat, assembled the dragoons in the Sun Inn yard, and kept them together there for some time, and then ordered them to their quarters, and to behave peaceably.”⁵⁵

John Fletcher, of Madeley, scholar, preacher, and saint, rector in the Church of England, but also one who believed the Methodist doctrines, and preached them, was compelled, like all other Methodists, to suffer reproach. In a letter to Charles Wesley, in 1762, he relates the following: “The opposition made to my ministry increases. A young clergyman, who lives in Madeley Wood, where he has great influence, has openly declared war against me by pasting on the church door a paper in which he charges me with rebellion, schism, and being a disturber of the public peace. He puts himself at the head of the gentlemen of the parish, as they term themselves, and supported by the rector of Wenlock, he is determined to put in force the Conventicle Act against me. A few weeks ago a widow, who lives in the church, and a young man, who read and prayed in my absence, were taken up. I attended them before the magistrate, and the young clergyman, with his troop, were present. They called me Jesuit, etc.; and the magistrate tried to frighten me by saying that he would put the Act in force, though we should assemble only in my own house. I pleaded my cause as well as I could; but seeing he was determined to hear no reason, I told

⁵⁵Gentleman's Magazine, March 14, 1760; also Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield*, vol. ii, p. 425.

him he must do as he pleased, and that, if the Act in question concerned us, we were ready to suffer all its rigors.”⁵⁶

The Rev. Robert Cox, M.A., says that the publicans and the colliers were Mr. Fletcher's special enemies: the publicans because he preached against drunkenness, which cut their purses, and the colliers because he preached against their brutal sport of bull-baiting. “The rage of the publicans generally spent itself in impotent revilings, but the fury of the colliers was near being attended with more serious consequences. One day, while a mob of them in a state of intoxication was baiting a bull near a place where he was expected to preach, they determined to pull him off his horse, set the dogs upon him, and in their own phrase, ‘bait the parson.’” This intended cruelty, fortunately, was thwarted by Mr. Fletcher's being detained at home till the mob had dispersed.⁵⁷

Before her marriage Mrs. Fletcher had established a home for the poor at Leytonstone in 1763. The mobs did not pull down this house, but they pelted the worshipers at the Sunday meetings with mud, damaged any property that they could find in the yard, and howled at the windows after dark.⁵⁸

Rugby, afterward made famous by the genius of its head master, Arnold, in the eighteenth century made itself infamous by its conduct toward the Methodists. The following is quoted from the experiences of Mr. Robert Miller, who was born at Rugby in 1763. Unfortunately no date is given: “Mr. Phillips was the first Methodist preacher that ever attempted to preach at Rugby, but the mob interrupted him in the middle of his discourse so that he was obliged to desist. The whole town was in an uproar, and in particular about one hundred scholars assaulted us in a very outrageous manner. But some of my former acquaintances interfered, and the mob consisting of several hundred persons divided; some crying out, ‘Let us hear what the man has to say,’ but were opposed by others. Presently

⁵⁶Tyerman, *Life of John Fletcher*, p. 79.

⁵⁷*Life of J. Fletcher*, p. 53, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. Ixvii.

⁵⁸Anna E. Keeling, *Eminent Methodist Women*, p. 65.

they went from words to blows. During the engagement we made our escape, covered with dirt from head to foot.”⁵⁹

R. Consterdine tells us that some times a mob would follow him for miles together with “vollies of oaths and curses.” He says he was thus treated for three months in Boston, but was neither afraid nor hurt by them.⁶⁰

The testimony of Duncan Wright, a soldier, is of interest, not so much on account of what he suffered, but of what he tells of others. He says in the beginning of 1764 he “was called to suffer a little for the testimony of Jesus. And, indeed, but a little; for what were a few threatenings, a little reproach, and shame, a few stones and rotten eggs to what many of the Methodists have suffered even in this age?”⁶¹

James Rogers met with “shameless and tumultuous” assemblies in 1764. They made great threats, but they did not hurt anyone.⁶² But at Lythe, about 1770, the opponents, seeing Methodism flourish and prosper, redoubled their fury. Some ruffians undertook to prevent his preaching, but as he did not fear them, their efforts failed. However, after repeatedly disturbing the preaching, these men collected all their forces one night and attacked the preacher and the people as they were leaving the preaching-house. Hearing the noise, Mr. Rogers went out among them. They saluted him, he says, “with volleys of oaths, and showers of stones and dirt.” One of the strongest of them then attempted to strike the preacher on the head, but he received the blows upon his arm, which became much bruised. Mr. Rogers then attempted to rescue a friend, whom they were “beating in a terrible manner.” Upon this his own assailant went up behind him and struck him a blow upon the temple that staggered and confused him. At this moment a young girl grabbed a stone of the weight of about two pounds, and struck

⁵⁹Methodist Magazine, 1801, p. 97.

⁶⁰Ibid., 1814, pp. 164ff.

⁶¹Experiences of Methodist Preachers, p. 215, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. xiv.

⁶²Methodist Magazine, 1789, p. 407.

the assailant on the back. Thereupon he left the preacher and, picking up the same stone, threw it at the girl, striking her in the face with such force that she was carried home for dead. She survived, however, but her face was cut to the bone, leaving a scar for life. Others of the Methodists were badly hurt; one had his face covered with blood, and his clothes torn half way down his back.⁶³

They considered their escape from the mob as providential, for at the time of this greatest violence a severe thunder storm came up. The heavy flashes of lightning dismayed the mob for a few moments, and the Methodists seized this opportunity to escape. They retreated in order, however, taking the old and infirm with them, lest these should fall into the hands of their enemies.⁶⁴

Mr. J. U. Walker relates a violent and brutal attack upon Mr. Blakey Spencer, a Methodist preacher. It was in 1766, near Stark-bridge. The mob was composed of both men and women. Mr. Spencer attempted to escape by running, but his strength failing, the mob caught him, threw him to the ground, and dragged him to the edge of a rivulet. Pointing to a whirlpool a woman shouted, "In with him. Drown him! Drown him!" But others of the mob observing him senseless upon the ground, and thinking that he was dead, left him. After some time he regained consciousness, and crawled home.⁶⁵

The Gentleman's Magazine relates the following: "While Mr. Moore, a Methodist, was preaching to a numerous audience in the ruins of old Saint Giles, he was attacked by a desperate mob, which fractured his skull and broke one of his arms. It is said the cause of assault was his inveighing against the errors of the Church of Rome, and his cautioning the people against being seduced by the artful insinuations of priests and Jesuits."⁶⁶

Thomas Taylor experienced another instance of the temper

⁶³Jackson's Lives, vol. iv, p. 295.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵History of Wesleyan Methodism in Halifax, etc., p. 113.

⁶⁶Gentleman's Magazine, 1766, p. 339.

of the mobs. Sometimes they were content to throw stones or clods. But not infrequently they sought out filth such as they could find to throw at the preacher, or with which to bedaub him. Mr. Taylor says, "I was covered with dirt from head to foot. All the filth they could scrape up was thrown, and when I attempted to turn my face on one side, I met it on the other." He escaped them "not much hurt, but dreadfully bedaubed," so that he "needed much washing to be touched."⁶⁷

On the 12th of March, 1767, Mr. John Valton went to the home of Mr. Harle to hear a Methodist sermon. Shortly after the text was announced Mr. Dearsby, the father of Mrs. Harle, accompanied by two others, and with a horsewhip in his hand, came into the house. He endeavored to strike the preacher, who evaded the blow and slipped upstairs. Mr. Dearsby then went up to Mr. Valton and asked, "Who do you belong to?" He replied, "To the King." The persecutor then exclaimed, "No, you are that dog," etc., "and I will write and get two or three of you turned out of your places." He then drove Mr. Valton out of the room. In the kitchen he threatened to roast him on the fire, and, being a large powerful man, he took him by the breast and thigh and laid him upon the bars. His two companions interfered at this, and rescued Mr. Valton. They now drove him out to the mob of about thirty men, who pulled him about, saying, "This is the clerk; pull him to pieces!" They tore his shirt, held him by the hair, till finally he escaped into a house and out the back door. He had not gone far, however, when he met the vicar with his lady, who had gone to see the "after game." The vicar saluted him with "Villain! etc., etc."⁶⁸

At the Conference in 1780 Mr. Valton was appointed to the Manchester Circuit. During the winter he visited Gladwick several times. All was quiet till several joined the society, then trouble began. The mob assembled, pelted him with stones and

⁶⁷Jackson's Lives, vol. v, pp. 39ff.

⁶⁸Ibid., vol. vi, pp. 63ff.

coal, till he was glad to retire within a house. The mob waited for them to come out, when it again attacked with dirt and stones. Fortunately, none were hurt, except one woman, who received a severe cut on the head.⁶⁹

In 1770 Mr. Darney visited Almondbury weekly. At his first visit he found seven in the Society, but in four weeks the number was increased to thirty-two. This success aroused persecution. The clergyman announced from the pulpit "that his teaching was quite sufficient for their instruction, and that he would not tolerate any other teachers." A constable now led the mob to the attack. Going to the house where the preacher lodged, he asked to speak to him. But instead of speaking, he seized him and endeavored to drag him out to the mob that was collected about the house. In this he was unsuccessful, as friends rescued Mr. Darney from the mob.⁷⁰

A week later Mr. Darney visited Almondbury again. During the sermon Constable Kay appeared with his mob. He addressed the preacher and said, "I charge thee in the name of King George to come down." Mr. Darney replied, "I charge thee in the name of the King of kings to let me alone." The mob then seized the preacher by the hair, who fell heavily upon the floor. Friends again interfered and rescued the preacher, taking him to a room upstairs. The mob, however, entered, seized him again and dragged him downstairs into the street, where they threw him down and kicked him "with their iron-shod clogs." They followed him down the street, striking and beating him severely. When they reached the parsonage they again threw him and maltreated him still more severely. He escaped to his lodgings, but in a serious condition.⁷¹ The firmness of a justice, who also was a clergyman, checked any such conduct in the future.

James Hall tells us that when he was a boy at Bury some Methodist preachers went to that place, but that the greater part of the people of the town and county were violently prejudiced

⁶⁹Jackson's Lives, vol. vi, pp. 99ff.

⁷⁰Richard Roberts, History of Methodism in Almondbury, p. 14.

⁷¹Ibid.

against them. "The rich and learned stood forth as champions to oppose them. All the calumnies that could be invented were plentifully fixed upon them." One Sunday Mr. Hall went with his father to hear a preacher. Just as they reached the door the people who had assembled ran out of the house with their clothes besmeared with dirt. They afterward learned "that some wild wretches had got up to the top of the partition wall, and poured mire and filth upon them as they were singing."⁷²

In the early seventies other troubles overtook them. The lease for their preaching-house was about to expire, and the owner refused to renew it. They could not rent another on any terms. Most of the land and houses about the town belonged to the lord of the manor or to the vicar, who were brothers, and were united against the Methodists. They tried to lease land from one who leased from the vicar, but this was thwarted. They then got a promise of land from one who leased under the lord of the manor. They had dug the foundation, and collected lime, stone, and timber with which to build. Then the vicar's agent took possession, and would not allow them to take anything away which they had collected. A mob stood ready to help him in this design.⁷³

This injustice, however, brought friends. Mr. Hall's uncle, who was not a Methodist, and who had a piece of free-hold near the town, let them have a lot for their building. But now a new difficulty arose. They could not purchase any building material, for no one dared to sell to them. But Mr. Hall's uncle again came to their relief. He allowed them to dig clay on his land with which to make brick. And though no brickmaker dared to help them, yet they succeeded in making their own brick, and building their own house. Some of the Society worked by day in making brick and in building, and others watched by night, that the mob might not tear their material to pieces.⁷⁴

⁷²Experiences of James Hall, by himself, Methodist Magazine, 1793, p. 9.

⁷³Experiences of James Hall, p. 28, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. ccxxxiv.

⁷⁴Ibid.

In 1772 Mr. John Murlin, while singing a hymn, was arrested and convicted of making a riot.⁷⁵ The next year Mr. John Oliver preached on the street at Wrexham to about one thousand hearers. He was arrested on the same charge as Mr. Murlin and put in jail for the night. The next morning he appeared before the magistrates, showed his license, and declared its validity. The justice told him that unless he would promise to preach there no more, he would order him whipped out of the town. He refused to make the promise, and after receiving some more contemptuous words was dismissed.⁷⁶

Douglas, in the Isle of Man, was visited by Mr. John Crook in 1776. Persecution began in a mild form, when the minister sent his scholars to sing ballads on the streets against the Methodists. At the next visit of Mr. Crook the opposition became intensified. As he walked through the streets men threw brickbats, stones, dirt, potatoes, etc., at him. When he undertook to preach the mob surrounded the house and threw limestone through the window, and when the service was ended the mob rushed at the people. The preacher received some dirt, which was thrown at him, but a friend, not a Methodist, protected him and took him away. This treatment was repeated at succeeding visits, till the governor of the island told the minister plainly that he would not allow any man to be persecuted for his religion, upon which the minister requested his scholars to cease annoying the Methodists.⁷⁷

Samuel Hicks was the village blacksmith at Micklefield, Yorkshire, and a local preacher. At one time while working at his anvil, without the slightest warning, a neighbor rushed up to him and struck him a heavy blow on the side with a stick, which nearly felled him. Samuel exclaimed: "What art thou about, man! What is this for!" Supposing it to be religious hatred, he turned the other side, lifted up his arm, and said,

⁷⁵Experiences and Happy Deaths of Methodist Preachers, p. 137.

⁷⁶Methodist Magazine, 1779, pp. 419-429.

⁷⁷Memoirs of John Crook, Methodist Magazine, 1808, p. 99.

“Here, man, hit that too.” This was too much for his assailant, who left him without further violence.⁷⁸

Mr. Zechariah Yewdall tells us that about 1780 the work was prospering at Monmouth notwithstanding the persecution that the Methodists had suffered for ten successive years. They appealed to the magistrates, but received no relief. Also the matter was carried to a higher court, but members of the mob were admitted as jurors, so again justice was abortive. Therefore, encouraged by “persons of property and power,” the mob scoffed and hissed and drowned the preacher’s voice, so that he was obliged to desist. They insulted the women “with beastly language,” and on one occasion a lady friend was nearly killed by a stone which struck her on the head.⁷⁹

Some time after 1780 Methodism found its way to the islands of Jersey and Guernsey, and in three or four months persecution followed, and continued till checked by the magistrates. In Guernsey, in 1786, an effort was made to transport Mr. De Queteville, who was a local preacher. Charges were brought against him in the Supreme Court of the island, but the witnesses who were to swear against him failed the prosecutors, and gave evidence in his favor, which led to his acquittal.⁸⁰

In 1786 the Rev. Adam Clarke, afterward Dr. Clarke, and author of Clarke’s Commentaries, was appointed to these islands. He met with even severer persecution than his predecessors. The house in which he preached was frequently surrounded by the mobs, and became nearly demolished. “The most violent personal indignities were frequently offered” to Mr. Clarke, “which more than once endangered his life.” “Finding that he was not to be intimidated, one of the magistrates placed himself at the head of the mob, and with his own hands dragged him from the pulpit.” “The drummer of the Saint Aubin militia was then called, who actually beat his drum through the street, while the preacher was conducted by the mob in the rear to the extremity

⁷⁸James Everett, *The Village Blacksmith*, p. 182.

⁷⁹Experiences of Z. Yewdall, *Methodist Magazine*, 1795, p. 268.

⁸⁰Coke and Moore, *Life of John Wesley*, pp. 331ff.

of the town, and dismissed with a most ferocious assurance that this was only a specimen of what he must expect in case he ever presumed to pay them another visit." "But this ill usage was not sufficient to drive him from the field of duty. He uniformly told them that at the appointed time he should again appear, whatever consequences might ensue." "The mob, finding him supported by an undaunted resolution, surrounded him on his return rather to admire his bravery than to execute its threatenings; and, permitting him to proceed in peace, they became the savage protectors of the man, whom they had confederated to destroy."⁸¹

Mr. William Bramwell, a young Methodist preacher, when Wesley was old, found difficulties sufficiently bitter to try his faith, even in these later years. His friend, James Sigston, in writing his Memoirs says that "while he remained at Blackburn he was exposed to the various persecutions which then raged against the followers of Wesley." "In visiting some parts of the circuit, Mr. Bramwell had to pass a tanyard where several bulldogs were kept. These were frequently let loose upon him, and he was obliged to defend himself from their ferocious attacks as well as he could. A large stick, pointed with iron, was his weapon of defense." Notwithstanding this, "his legs were sometimes torn in a dangerous manner."⁸²

Thus through a period of time extending over a half a century did this group of men suffer for the sake of what they most firmly believed to be the gospel of Jesus Christ. Whatever may be one's sentiments toward their religion, he must certainly bow reverently before the heroic courage and the unselfish devotion of men who counted nothing, not even life itself, as a sacrifice too great to offer if only they might live and preach the gospel as their consciences dictated.

⁸¹Coke and Moore, *Life of John Wesley*, pp. 331ff; also Osborn Pamphlets, *Memoirs of Women*, sec. 2; *Memoirs of Mrs. E. Arrive*, p. 24.

⁸²James Sigston, *Memoirs of Wm. Bramwell*, pp. 38ff.

CHAPTER VI

THE METHODIST PEOPLE AND THE MOBS

It has been said that the first mob violence against the Methodists occurred at Bristol, April 1, 1740.¹ Several nights before some had labored to disturb them, but at this time, while Wesley was preaching, the court, the alleys, and all the street, upward, and downward, were filled with people, "shouting, cursing, and swearing, and ready to swallow the ground with fierceness and rage." They disregarded the mayor's order to disperse, and grossly insulted the chief constable who was present. At length the mayor sent several officers, who arrested the ring-leaders, and did not leave the place till the mob was dispersed.

The next disturbance was at London. At the Foundry, the Methodist preaching-house, Charles Wesley found a holiday mob very outrageous.² But the magistrates, by order of the government, quickly checked disturbances at the capital. However, it was preparing soon to break out elsewhere with terrible fury.

Charles Wesley, accompanied by Mr. Graves, first preached at Wednesbury in November, 1742.³ He was followed by John Wesley in January, 1743, who spent four days there, preached eight sermons, and formed a society of about one hundred members.⁴ Mr. Egginton, the vicar, preached "a plain useful sermon," invited Wesley to his house, and told him that the oftener he came the welcomer he would be, for he said Mr. Wesley had done much good there already, and he doubted not but that he would do much more good.⁵

¹Above, p. 25.

²Charles Wesley, *Journal*, May 22, 1740.

³Tyerman, *Life and Times*, vol. i, pp. 406-407.

⁴John Wesley, *Journal*, January 8-12, 1743.

⁵John Wesley, *Works*, Letter to John Smith, London, June 25, 1746.

Wesley was followed by Mr. Williams, who imprudently vilified the clergy; then by a bricklayer; then by a plumber and glazier. Malice and feuds sprang up. "The Methodists spoke ill-natured things of their lawful ministers."⁶ Mr. Egginton heard "a vehement visitation charge" by a bishop, and also understood that the Methodists had publicly preached against drunkenness, which he thought "must have been designed for satire on him."⁷

Wesley again visited Wednesbury in April. He found things "surprisingly altered." "The inexcusable folly of Mr. Williams had so provoked Mr. Egginton that his former love was turned into hate." On Sunday he preached a sermon so wicked, and delivered with "such bitterness of voice and manner" as Wesley had never heard. The evangelist now began to prepare the people for what he knew must follow; and while he was preaching a gentleman rode up very drunk, uttering many bitter and unseemly words, and tried to ride over the people.⁸ Wesley departed for other fields of labor. But the minister of Wednesbury, Mr. Egginton, with several neighboring justices, Mr. Lane, of Bentley Hall, and Mr. Persehouse, of Walsal, in particular stirred up the basest of the people to violence.⁹

The storm broke about the 22d of May, 1743, and with intermissions raged the remainder of that year and part of the next.¹⁰ The signal for this outburst was a visit from Charles

⁶Tyerman, *Life and Times*, vol. i, pp. 406-407.

⁷John Wesley, *Works*, Letter to J. Smith.

⁸John Wesley, *Journal*, April 15-17, 1743.

It was afterwards learned that this was a neighboring clergyman.

⁹John Wesley, *Works*, *Short History of Methodist People*, par. 23.

NOTE—The account here of the Wednesbury riot is taken chiefly from a pamphlet entitled *Modern Christianity Exemplified*. Other brief accounts may be found in Jonathan Crowther, *Methodist Manual*, p. 10; John Wesley's *Journal*, February 18, 1744; John Wesley's *Works*, *A Farther Appeal*, par. 6ff.; Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol. i, pp. 406ff.; John Wesley's *Works*, *A Short History of the Methodist People*, pars. 23ff.

¹⁰John Wesley, *Works*, *Modern Christianity, Exemplified at Wednesbury*, par. 5.

NOTE—*Modern Christianity Exemplified at Wednesbury* is a pamphlet published by John Wesley, now found in his *Works*. It consists of the depo-

Wesley. He came on the 20th, and found a society of above three hundred members. The enemy raged exceedingly, and the ministers preached against the Methodists. A few had returned railing for railing, but the generality had behaved as the followers of Jesus Christ.¹¹ On the 21st he preached at Walsal. The mob shouted, and threw stones incessantly, and as he was leaving, a ruffian twice bore him down from the steps.¹² The next day he preached at Wednesbury again, taking his leave on the 23rd.¹³ It was now that the black and threatening cloud poured forth its torrents of fury. It began first at Darlaston. Ten Methodists, one a woman, had all the windows of their houses broken, and many of their goods damaged or spoiled; six, one a woman, had all their windows broken twice; three, one a widow, had their windows broken and money extorted to save their houses; two had their windows broken, and their goods broken or spoiled; one had his windows broken, and his house broken open, some goods taken and some lost; one had his windows broken twice, and was compelled to go along with the rioters; one, Elizabeth Lingham, a widow with five children, had her goods spoiled, her spinning wheel broken, which was the support of her family, and her parish allowance reduced from two shillings six pence to one shilling six pence a week; one had his windows broken twice, and his wife, who was soon to become a mother, abused and beaten with clubs; one had his windows broken, and to save his house was forced to give the mob drink; one had his windows and goods broken, and was forced to remove from the town; one had his windows broken twice, and his wife so frightened that she miscarried.¹⁴

The Wednesbury Methodists had joined with those of

sitions of thirty-four persons, one of whom was Wesley himself. They state what they experienced or saw. (See John Wesley, Works; also Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. xvii.)

¹¹Charles Wesley, Journal, May 20, 1743.

¹²Ibid., May 21, 1743.

¹³Ibid., May 22-23, 1743.

¹⁴Modern Christianity Exemplified at Wednesbury, par. 5.

Darlaston in their evening meeting to sing, pray, and read the Bible. When the mob arose and broke the windows of the house in which they met they too were pelted with clods and stones. Mr. John Adams, the owner of the house, secured a warrant for some of the rioters to appear before Justice P. (Persehouse), of Walsal, on the 30th of May. Mr. Adams desired some of those of Wednesbury to go with him. Accordingly, several went, among whom were John Eaton, James Jones, and Francis Ward. They met their Darlaston friends at a house in Walsal. The mob there arose and pelted them all with dirt and stones while going to the justice's house. The justice told them that they would have to go downtown, then he would hear their complaint. The mob continued to pelt them, even with the justice present, for he went with them. Francis Ward desired him to quell the mob, but he refused. When they reached the town the justice desired a hearing in the street among the mob, but they prevailed upon him to go into a house.¹⁵ Here, after a little talk, he exclaimed, "What, are you Methodists?" and left them and went out to the mob. They stayed in the house for some time, but when they went out the mob gathered about them, beat and pelted them with whatever they could find. Several of them were severely bruised. One struck Francis Ward on the eye and cut it so that he expected to lose its sight. He got into a shop, had his eye dressed, and returned to his friends. The mob pursued him, took him out of the house, and beat him severely. He got from them, and returned to the house; they brought him out again, dragged him along the street and through the kennel back and forth till he was so weak that he could not get up. Then a woman came and said to the mob, "Will ye kill the man!" and lifted him up. He got back to the house, and with difficulty got home, but the abuse that he had received threw him into a fever.¹⁶ The house was a public house, which he and the rest of the company did not dare to leave till dark, when they made

¹⁵Modern Christianity Exemplified, pars. 1, 2, and 4.

¹⁶Ibid., par. 4.

good their escape, one and two at a time. John Eaton and Francis Ward were the last to leave.¹⁷

On the 19th of June James Yeoman, of Walsal, saw Mary Bird in her father's house at Wednesbury, and swore that a mob would come the next day, break their windows, and kill her.¹⁸ According to this previous arrangement, the next day a multitude, chiefly from Walsal, Darlaston, and Bilston, gathered in the churchyard at Wednesbury. When they had assembled their whole company by sounding a horn they went forth on their mission of violence. The rioting continued till near the last of the month. It raged chiefly in Wednesbury, Walsal, Darlaston, and West Bromwich.¹⁹ When it ceased, there were in and about Wednesbury more than eighty houses which had been assaulted, and in many of these there were not left three panes of glass.²⁰

On the 20th, true to the threat of James Yeoman, the mob went to the home of John Bird. They demanded money of his wife. She offered them some, which they snatched out of her hand, then broke ten front windows, the sash frames, shutters, cases, chest of drawers, hanging-press, and damaged the ceiling, doors, dresser, and many other things.²¹ The daughter, Mary, was threatened with murder, and struck on the side of the head with a stone, which knocked her down, and caused the blood to gush out.²²

The windows, casements, and ceiling of John Turner's house were broken.²³ Humphrey Hands was seized by the throat, and thrown down; he arose and was struck on the eye and knocked down; then the mob went to his house, broke the windows, window posts, and many of his household goods. They went

¹⁷Modern Christianity Exemplified, par. 2.

¹⁸Ibid., par. 8.

¹⁹John Wesley, Works, A Farther Appeal, part 3, sec. 2, par. 6.

²⁰Modern Christianity, pars. 2 and 11.

²¹Ibid., par. 9.

²²Ibid., par. 8.

²³Ibid., par. 10.

to his shop, broke it open and destroyed his pots, bottles, medicines, and fixtures.²⁴

Again, on the 20th of June, Mr. Adams's house at Darlaston was attacked by a rude mob, which threw many stones through the window. Mr. Adams appealed once more to Squire Persehouse, who again would not act at his own hall, but sent them down into the town where a great mob was waiting for them. He then refused to act for them, but went to the door and told the mob that "they might do what they would," then took off his hat, swung it about, and went away. Now the Methodists were at the mercy of the mob, which beat and bruised them severely.²⁵

About a week later the Darlaston mob went to the home of Jonathan Jones, a farmer, broke nine large windows and much of his goods; then meeting his man with a team, they beat and abused him and the team. At night they returned to the house to destroy the rest of the goods, but Mr. Jones gave them money, and they went away.²⁶

At West Bromwich the assembled mob asked Mr. Jonas Turner whether he would keep from these Methodists and go to the church. He replied that he went to the church very often, but never saw any of them there. They then dragged him about, and broke all of his windows, and threw into the house three basketfuls of stones to break his goods.²⁷

The next day, June 21st, they assembled again in the churchyard.²⁸ From here they went first to the home of John Eaton. He was constable, so he went to the door with his constable's staff, and began to read the Act of Parliament against riots, but the stones flew so thick about his head that he was forced to retire. They broke half of his windows, and went

²⁴Modern Christianity Exemplified, par. 11.

²⁵Ibid., par. 3.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., par. 6.

²⁸Ibid., par. 2.

away, but some hours later returned and broke all the rest, the door of the house, and a large clock.²⁹

The home of Mary Turner also was assaulted. She was within the house and her two daughters without. The mob threw stones and bricks into the house so fast that she feared to remain within, and ran out among them. Her daughter observed this and cried, "My mother will be killed." They then threw stones at the daughter till she ran into a neighbor's house. They followed the other daughter with stones, and one with a stake. She was greatly frightened, and ran into another house. Whereupon the mob broke what panes of glass remained, and a woman came with a club and broke part of the tiling on the roof.³⁰

During the latter part of June John Griffiths and Francis Ward went to a justice of the peace, told him the condition of themselves and of their neighbors; how their houses were broken and their goods spoiled. He replied, "I suppose you follow these parsons that come about!" talked roughly to them, and said, "I will neither meddle nor make," and refused them a warrant.³¹

After the commission of these outrages Mr. Milford Wilks heard the Rev. Mr. Egginton say to the mob: "Well, my lads, he that has done it out of pure zeal for the church; I don't blame him. My lads, I hope you will let us settle our affairs in our own parish ourselves; but, if these men should come, and they should follow them, then your help will be needful."³²

Wesley again visited Wednesbury on the 20th of October. This visit was in response to the earnest entreaty of several persons from the town. He yielded and went. At twelve o'clock he preached without molestation in a ground near the middle of the town.³³ On the afternoon and evening of this day occurred

²⁹Modern Christianity Exemplified, par. 1.

³⁰Ibid., par. 7.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., par. 13.

³³John Wesley, Journal, October 20, 1743; also Modern Christianity Exemplified, par. 34.

the memorable riot against him, which has received further notice in another chapter.³⁴

A few days after Wesley left, the following "curiosity," as Wesley called it, was circulated in this vicinity :

Staffordshire.

To all High-Constables, Petty-Constables, and others of his Majesty's Peace-Officers within the said county, and particularly to the Constable of Tipton [near Walsal.],

Whereas, we his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said county of Stafford have received information that several disorderly persons, styling themselves Methodist preachers, go about raising routs and riots to the great damage of his Majesty's liege people, and against the peace of our Sovereign Lord, the King ;

These are in his Majesty's name to command you and every one of you, within your respective districts, to make diligent search after the said Methodist preachers, and to bring him, or them, before some of us, his said Majesty's Justices of the Peace, to be examined concerning their unlawful doings.

Given under our hands and seal this — day of October, 1743.

J. LANE.

W. PERSEHOUSE.³⁵

These were the same justices to whose houses Wesley was taken, and who refused to see him.

Charles Wesley was near the place and was urged to go and preach to the people in the middle of the town. He responded and reached Wednesbury after dark October 25. The Methodists held a service that night at Francis Ward's, and again early in the morning. Then, as soon as it was light, Charles Wesley walked down the town and preached from Rev. 2. 10, after which he received into the society a young man, who had had his arm broken in protecting John Wesley from the mob, six days before ; also he received on trial "Honest Munchin," as he was called, the captain of the mob that assaulted John Wesley, and the man who finally rescued him from the rabble. Charles Wesley then departed, riding through the town unmolested.³⁶

³⁴Above, pp. 26ff.

³⁵John Wesley, Journal, October 20, 1743.

³⁶Charles Wesley, Journal, October 25, 1743.

Rioting broke out again in November, at Line and Mare's Green. The mob went one evening to the place of meeting and tore down a shop belonging to the place. At the next meeting they came again and made the roof of the house to crack and sink so that the members of the society thought it unsafe to remain within lest it should fall upon them. Therefore they went out in the dark amid a shower of stones.³⁷

The Methodists then thought it best to meet in the daytime, but immediately the mob was assembled together by the blowing of a horn. They went from house to house with threatenings, and in one instance plundered things to the value of several pounds.

The sufferers tried to secure a warrant, but the magistrate exclaimed: "What, you are Methodists! Get about your business; you shall have no warrant. I am informed you are the vilest men that live."³⁸

In January and February, 1744,³⁹ rioting and violence reached its climax. The common crier went through the town ringing a bell, and gave notice that all the people belonging to the society must go to a certain house and sign a paper to the effect that they would not hear the Methodist preachers any more, and that, if they did not do so, they must expect to have their houses pulled down.⁴⁰ This the far greater part refused to do, choosing rather to suffer the loss of all things. Then the plundering began. House after house was entered and the

³⁷Modern Christianity Exemplified, par. 14.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹NOTE—In *Modern Christianity Exemplified* the riots of January and February are given as occurring in 1743. This is an error, doubtless a misprint. The society was not formed till January, 1743, and rioting did not begin till May 22 of that year. Also, the Methodists heard Charles Wesley on February 5, 1744, "at the peril of their lives," and on February 18, 1744, John Wesley received from James Jones an account of rioting on January 23 and February 1, 6, etc. This account relates the same occurrences, as in 1744, which are given in *Modern Christianity* as in 1743. (John Wesley, *Journal*, January 8-12, 1743; Charles Wesley, *Journal*, February 5, 1744; John Wesley, *Journal*, February 18, 1744.)

⁴⁰Ibid., par. 16.

furniture, and clothing and bedding destroyed or stolen, and in many instances the windows and doors of the house destroyed;⁴¹ in one case the house was partly torn down and in another completely demolished.⁴² Many of their shops and business places were greatly damaged, and in several instances the tools or goods were ruthlessly destroyed. In one case they destroyed five hives of bees; killed and carried away the hens, and threw the hay out of the barn.⁴³ In another they injured a calf so that it had to be killed. And this after having rifled and looted the houses.⁴⁴

Thus in the dead of winter the Methodists, with their helpless children, were driven from their homes perhaps to hide in the hedges, or in the darkness. And upon re-entering their houses, themselves cold and wet and tired and penniless, to find them barren, if not destroyed. In some instances the neighbors tried to save the homes or the goods of the persecuted by giving money to the rioters,⁴⁵ but they dared not receive them into their houses lest they should suffer by the spoiling of their own goods.⁴⁶ All this suffering could have been avoided simply by signing a paper of recantation. Some wept at such wickedness, but they rejoiced in the plundering of their goods, some having suffered thus several times, rather than to offend their consciences.⁴⁷ They "continued to meet morning and evening in great love one with another, nothing terrified by their adversaries."⁴⁸ Nearly a century later many Methodist families in Wednesbury still preserved fragments of furniture as precious memories of the sufferings of their fathers.⁴⁹

Charles Wesley was on the scene again on February 5, and

⁴¹Modern Christianity Exemplified, par. 21.

⁴²Ibid., pars. 17 and 15.

⁴³Ibid., par. 18.

⁴⁴Ibid., par. 30.

⁴⁵Ibid., par. 22.

⁴⁶Ibid., par. 23, 26.

⁴⁷Ibid., par. 21, 26, and 30.

⁴⁸Ibid., par. 21.

⁴⁹R. Watson, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 196.

preached to a large congregation, many of whom were present at the risk of personal danger. He encouraged them as best he could, taking leave of them at daybreak the next morning.⁵⁰ This visit was at the time of the most destructive of all the riots, for these disorders were at their height from January to February, 1744. He was informed that, particularly at Walsal, the rioters had set up papers in the town calling upon the country around to rise with them and exterminate the Methodists.⁵¹

Shocking, however, as was the brutality of this merciless mob, yet more bestial still was their treatment of some of the women. The sufferings of some have been noticed above. The worst came nearly the last. One was knocked down, and bruised in many places;⁵² another was forced to flee from her home and to stay in the fields in midwinter with her infant, born only two weeks before, in her arms,⁵³ and a third was assaulted by a group of men, who threw her to the ground, and four or five held her that another might force her. She fought bitterly and untiringly, and, after being severely beaten, escaped them.⁵⁴ Others also, even pregnant women, were treated in a manner "too horrible to mention."⁵⁵ In April Charles Wesley sent sixty pounds to Wednesbury for the relief of this afflicted people.⁵⁶

It is not surprising that this spirit of persecution spread against a sect that was "everywhere spoken against," particularly after such an example had been set in the vicinity of Wednesbury. It found bitter expression at Sheffield, where, on the 25th of May, only a few days after the outbreak at Wednesbury, the Methodist meetinghouse was leveled to the ground.⁵⁷ This mode

⁵⁰Charles Wesley, Journal, February 5, 1744.

⁵¹Ibid., February 4, 1744.

⁵²Modern Christianity Exemplified, par. 16.

⁵³Ibid., par. 27.

⁵⁴Ibid., pars. 17, 32; also John Wesley, History of People Called Methodist, par. 23; also John Wesley, A Farther Appeal, part 3, sec. 2, par. 9.

⁵⁵John Wesley, Journal, February 18, 1744.

⁵⁶Charles Wesley, Journal, April 19, 1744.

⁵⁷James Everett, Historical Sketches of Methodism in Sheffield, p. 43.

of attack was repeated in April, 1745. Wesley, shortly after this, preached on the floor, which was all that remained of the building.⁵⁸ Then, for better security against the mob, the next house was built in the form of a dwelling, and was occupied as such. In February, 1746, the mob extended its operations to this house. The rioting began on Monday, and continued all that week till Saturday, when the building was finally demolished.⁵⁹ Violences and annoyances continued here with varying degrees of bitterness till 1765, when they finally abated.

At Hampton were also serious disturbances. The local preacher, who led the society and preached to the people, was thrown into a lime pit, and later into the river, where he was injured. A young woman had her arm broken in two places and several others were seriously hurt.⁶⁰ A complete and detailed account of this riot is not given, but it necessitated collecting sixty pounds for the relief of the sufferers.

Another great outbreak was in Cornwall, and rivaled that of Wednesbury for bitterness. It began probably some time in May, 1743,⁶¹ and raged for more than a year, before its bitterness abated. The mass of the people were sunk into deep ignorance, extreme brutality, and vulgar vices. There was, however, a small company that withstood the common wickedness. These met in a society by themselves for religious exercises. They were found by a captain, who told them of the Methodists. They then sent an invitation to the Wesleys to visit them, which led to the beginning of the society in Cornwall.⁶² But Wesley sorrowfully records that the "same imprudence which laid the foundation for all the disturbances in Staffordshire had broken out here also, and turned many of our friends into bitter and

⁵⁸John Wesley, *Journal*, April 29, 1745.

⁵⁹James Everett, *Historical Sketches*, pp. 57-58.

⁶⁰George Whitefield, *Works*, vol. ii, p. 31ff., Letter to Mrs. D., July 9, 1743.

⁶¹John Wesley, *Journal*, May 17, 1743.

⁶²John Wesley, *Works*, *History Methodist People*, par. 27; also Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 416.

implacable enemies.”⁶³ Charles Wesley reached Saint Ives between seven and eight o’clock on the evening of July 16, 1743, and was saluted roughly by the mob. He found the people as sheep among wolves. “The priests stir up the people, and make their minds evil effected toward the brethren.” On Sunday, the 17th, he heard the rector preach, when he spoke of “the new sect,” calling them “enemies of the church, seducers, troublers, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, etc.” He then rode to Wednock, where he heard the curate preach on “Beware of false prophets,” and uttered such a “hodgepotch of railing, foolish lies as Satan himself might have been ashamed of.”⁶⁴ He preached at Saint Ives, and the mob broke upon them, beat and dragged the women about and trampled upon them without mercy.⁶⁵ This brutality was repeated several different times. Later they demolished the preaching-house, and went in the dead of night and broke the windows of the houses of all that were suspected of being Methodists. Into one home they threw heavy stones, some of which fell on a pillow within a few inches of an infant child.⁶⁶ All the summer of 1744 the persecution here raged as violently as in Staffordshire. Many were knocked down, and many were very bloody, having been beaten severely.⁶⁷ Some were imprisoned and sent for soldiers, as we shall see in another chapter.⁶⁸ This persecution extended to various parts of Cornwall and continued for several years. The people were scattered for a time, but were gathered together again, and helped each other to stand firm.

During the year 1744 persecution was by no means local. Wesley says that at this time the war against the Methodists, so called, was everywhere carried on, and with far more vigor

⁶³John Wesley, Journal, May 17, 1743.

⁶⁴Charles Wesley, Journal, July 15-17, 1743.

⁶⁵Ibid., July 22ff.

⁶⁶Ibid., July 19ff., 1744.

⁶⁷John Wesley, Journal, September 16, 1744.

⁶⁸Charles Wesley, Journal, July 21, 1746.

than that against the Spaniards.⁶⁹ Wherever they went there was opposition, reviling or violence, or all combined.

In February violence broke out at Dudley. Houses were broken into, robbed, and destroyed, and, if any were heard singing or praying by day or by night, the house would be broken into, and the people robbed or beaten with impunity.⁷⁰ There was still violence here as late as 1749.

February 5, 1744, there was rioting at Birmingham, where also the storm had begun in earnest. The people were violently driven from their place of meeting and pelted in the streets with dirt and stones.⁷¹ The mob struck Mr. Sant on the temple with a large stick and knocked him down. He was taken home for dead. They might have killed him, but for the cries of a little child, which alarmed the family inside, who rescued him.⁷² There were also disturbances here in 1753, in 1764, and in 1766.⁷³

On February 6, 1744, disturbances broke out at Wittenton. On the 8th at Litchfield, where the mob laid waste all before them, two families suffered loss to the amount of two hundred pounds.⁷⁴

On April 29, 1745, there occurred a shameful riot at Exeter at which the women, as they left the preaching house, were pushed down into the dirt. A few days later another riot occurred here, which was far more violent than the former.⁷⁵ Tyerman quotes the following from the London Evening Post for May 16, 1745: "In Exeter the Methodists had a meetinghouse behind the Guildhall, and on May 6th the mob gathered at the door and pelted those who entered with potatoes, mud, and dung. On coming out the congregation were all beaten without exception; many were trampled under foot; many fled without their hats

⁶⁹John Wesley, Journal, September 16, 1744.

⁷⁰Charles Wesley, Journal, February 3, 1744.

⁷¹Ibid., February 5ff., 1744.

⁷²Ibid., February 8, 1744.

⁷³John Wesley, Journal, March 22, 1753; March 21, 1764; March 19, 1766.

⁷⁴Christian History, vol. vii, pp. 44-45; Charles Wesley, Journal, February 9, 1744.

⁷⁵Christian History, vol. vii, No. 2, p. 34.

and wigs, and some without coats, or with half of them torn to tatters. Some of the women were lamed, and others stripped naked and rolled most indecently in the kennel, their faces besmeared with lampblack, flour, and dirt. This disgraceful mob consisted of some thousands of cowardly blackguards, and the disturbance was continued till midnight."⁷⁶

The author of an anonymous pamphlet, published in 1745, assures the public that he never would have "taken up his pen in defense of the Methodists, had they not been daily and openly treated in Exeter with such rudeness, violence, and abuse as would have made even Indians or pagans to have blushed. . . . The Methodists, not only on the day of the grand riot, but many times since, have been treated by this lawless rabble with the utmost fury and violence. They have been mobbed and insulted at noonday in the open streets, and furiously pelted with dirt, stones, sticks and cabbage-stumps."⁷⁷ He relates that "the rioters violently entered the Methodist meetinghouse, interrupted the minister with opprobrious and obscene language, and fell upon him in a most furious manner with blows and kicks. They treated every man they could lay their hands upon with such abuse and indignity as is not to be expressed. But what is more than all was their abominable rudeness to the poor women. Some were stripped quite naked. Others, notwithstanding their most piercing cries for mercy and deliverance, were forcibly held by some of the wicked ruffians while others turned" their garments "over their heads, and forced them to remain in that condition as a spectacle to their infamous banter and ridicule; the poor creatures being afterwards dragged through the kennel, which had

⁷⁶Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 473.

⁷⁷Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield*, vol. ii, p. 114ff.

NOTE—This pamphlet is entitled *A Brief Account of the Late Persecution and Barbarous Usage of the Methodists at Exeter by an Impartial Hand*. The writer assures his readers that he is not a Methodist himself, and he "concludes by saying that his pamphlet was written 'for his own private amusement, and without any design to publish it,' and that its publication was the result of what he saw and heard after the pamphlet was finished." (Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield*, vol. ii, pp. 114ff.)

been filled with mud and dirt. Others of the women had their clothes," even their underclothes, "torn from their backs. Toward the close of the evening one of the mob forced a woman up into the gallery and attempted other outrages three different times. After many struggles she freed herself, leaped over the gallery, and so made her escape. Many, to avoid falling into the hands of this wicked crew, leaped out of the windows, and got over the garden walls to the endangering of their lives. This outrage was committed in the center of the city, and in the presence of many thousands. The riot continued for several hours. . . . Many of the women are now in very critical circumstances, under the care of surgeons and apothecaries, and their lives are even yet, two days after the riot, in danger."⁷⁸

In February, 1747, riots broke out at Devizes. The mob began by ringing the bells backward, and by men running back and forth through the streets. While searching for the preacher, who was their intended victim, they broke open and ransacked the house where they supposed him to have been. They also went to the inn and plied the fire engine upon it, thinking him there. In the meantime they caught an influential member of the society, threw him into a pond, and seriously injured him. It was reported that his back was broken.⁷⁹

In May of this year there were disturbances in Manchester,⁸⁰ and about the same time at Port Isaac, where the mob assaulted Edward Grenfill, whom they left for dead.⁸¹ It was probably during this year also that John Nelson's wife suffered so cruelly near Wakefield. She and some other women had set out for Birstal, but the mob overtook them in the fields. She spoke to them; the men left, but the women cursed her, saying, "You are John Nelson's wife, and here you shall die." Though they saw that she was soon to become a mother, yet they beat her so

⁷⁸Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield*, vol. ii, pp. 114ff.

⁷⁹Charles Wesley, *Journal*, February 24, 1747.

⁸⁰John Wesley, *Journal*, May 7, 1747.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, July 13, 1747.

brutally as to kill the child, and caused her to miscarry immediately upon reaching home.⁸²

At Roughlee a mob assembled, which caused the people to run before it amid showers of dirt and stones. They neither regarded age nor sex. They trampled some in the mire, or dragged them by the hair, or beat them with clubs. They forced one to leap from a rock ten or twelve feet high into the river, and when he crawled out, wet and bruised, they were restrained with difficulty, from throwing him in again.⁸³ While this outrage was being perpetrated the magistrates were well content to let matters alone.

Even Lady Huntingdon's home was not spared from being the scene of these riots, though not till the spring of 1750, when some of the better people, so called, "stirred some of the baser sort to riot before her Ladyship's door, while the gospel was preaching," and while some of the people were returning home they narrowly escaped being murdered.⁸⁴

At Wrangle a company of people was assaulted, many of whom were beaten, some knocked down, and others dragged away and thrown into drains or deep water. The mob then broke into a house, dragged the man out of bed, and forced him out of the house naked; then they spoiled the goods of the house.⁸⁵ At Uffcumbe the mob having been disappointed in their victim, caught a poor chimney-sweep, though not a Methodist, dragged him away, and half killed him before he escaped them.⁸⁶

In 1751 at Frome a most cowardly persecution took place, and again, as so frequently before, women were the bitterest sufferers. The people were quietly engaged in a service, in a licensed house, when two men began a violent abuse, and engaged in vulgar and obscene songs. They then began to destroy the

⁸²John Nelson, Journal, p. 91.

⁸³John Wesley, Journal, August 25, 1748.

⁸⁴George Whitefield, Letter, Ashby, May 19, 1750.

⁸⁵John Wesley, Journal, August 15, 1751.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, August 30, 1751.

pulpit furniture. Some women tried to quiet them, when one woman was thrown violently to the floor, and injured by the fall. Whereupon, this injured woman and her sister, an elderly lady, were summoned to appear before a magistrate. Their assailant, with others, swore that they had assaulted him and torn his shirt. They were locked up for that night, and the next day, Sunday, were taken to jail in a neighboring town. Then they were taken out of jail and conducted to Taunton, where the court was held, in company with common criminals. At the court, for three successive days, they were placed in the common coop with these criminals. Here, without friends or advisers, they were told that the matter would be dropped against them, and were advised that this was best for them. They accepted, and the mock case was ended. But the women wrote a full account of the affair, which was published in pamphlet form. Mr. Tuck reproduced part of this pamphlet in his account. This occurrence broke up the society in Frome. It was re-established about five years later, though not without bitter persecution, in which women were grossly insulted on their way to and from the meetings. At one time a meeting was broken up, and the furniture of the room carried into the street and burned. At other times men who were engaged in prayer were seized by the mob, and their heads struck against the wall with such force as to cause the blood to gush out from the nose and mouth.⁸⁷

In 1752 there occurred a riot at Norwich. The Gentleman's Magazine attempts to give some of the reasons for this disorder. This writer says that one cause *seemed to be* that the preacher, who ought to have been content with preaching on Sundays, called his hearers together two or three times a day; that the parish was loaded with helpless infants by this much preaching, while the preacher "pocketed ten or twelve guineas every week." It is a little surprising that such a magazine should rehearse the

⁸⁷Stephen Tuck, *Wesleyan Methodism in Frome*, pp. 16ff. He copies from a pamphlet published at the time of the occurrence.

common slanders of the day. He adds, however, that the populace did great damage to the houses of several of the Methodists, and injured the persons of others.⁸⁸ There was violence here again in 1754, 1761, and as late as 1775. At this last date the captain of the mob "struck many, chiefly women, with a large stick."⁸⁹

At Chester, in 1752, the Methodists were insulted by the base and savage, and threatened with dismissal by those of education and polished manners. In July the preaching house was partly demolished by the mob.⁹⁰

At Leeds, in 1753, one, "by the courtesy of England, called a gentleman," hired a townsman eminent for drunkenness and fighting to head the mob, which pursued the preachers from place to place, and damaged the house of a neighbor who allowed Methodist services to be held in his home.⁹¹ In the same year the meetinghouse at Nantwich was demolished. And Whitefield writes regretting that the tumults in certain parts still continue at such a height.⁹²

William Green, a schoolmaster, was the principal Methodist at Rotherham, and consequently was the chief object of the vengeance of the mobs. At one time, about 1750 or later, a "mob assembled, which was not infrequently the case when he passed along the street. Some of the most ferocious caught him by the hair and dragged him through the most conspicuous parts of the town." At another time the mob went to his house, broke his windows and forcibly entered his home. In the meantime Mr. Green had escaped by the back door. After many fruitless attempts to find him themselves, they set hounds upon his trail. He escaped by climbing a tree and hiding himself among its foliage. The hounds went round and round the place where he

⁸⁸Gentleman's Magazine, March 22, 1752.

⁸⁹John Wesley, Journal, December 2, 1775.

⁹⁰Ibid., July 3, 1752; Methodist Magazine, 1809, p. 232ff.

⁹¹Methodist Magazine, 1803, p. 110.

⁹²George Whitefield, Letter, Wolverhampton, October 27, 1753; Letter, London, December 17, 1753.

was concealed without manifesting any sign of detecting his whereabouts.⁹³

However, there were occasional incidents that would appear humorous, were it not for the brutality involved. One of these occurred in Oxfordshire in 1764. A mob was intent upon catching the Methodist preacher, who escaped them. One of the persecutors, not willing entirely to miss the sport, sought an eminence, and began to mimic the preacher. Thereupon the mob carried the farce much farther than he had anticipated. They pulled down the mock preacher and rolled him about in the dirt, to their great delight but to his mortification, till he was very glad to escape.⁹⁴

On August 21, 1770, "a great riot happened at the Methodist Chapel in Cumberland St." (probably London). "The preacher was worsted, the congregation driven out, and a padlock put upon the door."⁹⁵ And as late as 1774 a mob assembled at Richmond, near London, to the "no small terror" of the Methodists. The mob then selected one of their own number, whom they called Rowland Hill. They held a mock trial, and condemned the victim to death, and ordered him chained down. Two days later they proceeded to the mock execution in the exact form that was observed with criminals, till they reached a place opposite the Methodist meetinghouse, where there had been a gallows set up. Here they completed the farce, some affirm, by hanging an effigy, while others say that the victim was hanged with the rope under his arms.⁹⁶

⁹³Wesleyan Methodism in Sheffield, pp. 84, 86.

⁹⁴Methodist Magazine, 1807, p. 413.

⁹⁵Gentleman's Magazine, August, 1770, p. 391.

⁹⁶Gospel Magazine, 1774, p. 215.

CHAPTER VII

PERILS OF THE LAY PREACHERS IN IRELAND

IN any case of persecution, that the preachers were marked men and the chief objects of popular hatred has been observed in regard to England,¹ and it was the same in Ireland. Were it not for the depositions, which were prepared in order to place evidence before the grand jury, we would know much less about the details of the sufferings of the Methodist people. There having been no such depositions left by the preachers, our chief sources of information concerning them are their biographies, written by themselves, or by friends. Where no biographies remain we know but very little about them, only that they all suffered with the Methodist people in general.

In November, 1747, during Charles Wesley's first visit to Dublin, having heard that the minister had procured a mob to hinder the preaching, he would not allow either preachers or people to expose themselves.² Near Athlone, however, the preachers were unexpectedly exposed and assaulted. Charles Wesley, in company with six others, one of whom was Jonathan Healey, a preacher, was riding toward the city when they were met by five or six horsemen. Mr. Healey was three or four yards ahead of the others. A volley of stones flew, and Mr. Healey was knocked off his horse. He fell backward and lay senseless upon the ground. The mob was seen to be gathering from all sides. Wesley observed that the man who had knocked down Mr. Healey was striking him in the face with a club. He called to him to stop, which drew the assailant upon himself, but he thinks that probably by this he saved Mr. Healey's life.³

¹Above, p. 61.

²Charles Wesley, *Journal*, November 12, 1747.

³*Ibid.*, February 10, 1748.

The priest of the village had preached against the Methodists on the previous Sunday, and had encouraged the mob. The man who struck Mr. Healey was the priest's servant, and rode his master's horse. After attacking Wesley he returned to his attack upon Mr. Healey, and was about to finish him with a knife, "swearing desperately that he would cut him up," when a poor woman went from her hut to his rescue. She was struck a terrible blow, which "half killed her,"⁴ and from which she afterward died.⁵ However, she hindered the assailant till other help arrived. A Mr. Jamison, a Protestant, "ran in with a pitchfork and struck the clerk into the shoulder. The bone stopped it. The man made a second push at him, which was broke by Mr. Hanby," one of Wesley's company, who ran in and saved his enemy's life.⁶

The hedges were lined with papists, who kept the field till they saw the dragoons coming out of Athlone. Then they took to their heels, and Mr. Hanby after them. In the midst of the bog they seized the priest's servant, carried him prisoner to Athlone, and charged the high constable with him, who quickly let him go. A Protestant met him and beat him unmercifully; but he escaped at last and fled for his life, sorely wounded."⁷ When Wesley and his company returned to the place of attack, they found Jonathan Healey in a hut where a woman and her husband had carried him. They got him to Athlone, where his wounds were dressed by a surgeon, who would take no fee for his labor. At Athlone, Tyerman says, "A congregation of above two thousand assembled in the market. Charles Wesley preached to them from the windows of a ruined house; and then the knot of brave-hearted Methodists marched to the field of battle, stained with Healey's blood, and sang a song of triumph and of praise to God."⁸

⁴Charles Wesley, Journal, February 10, 1748.

⁵Ibid., September 24, 1748.

⁶Ibid., February 10, 1748.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Tyerman, Life and Times of John Wesley, vol. ii, p. 2.

Persecution seems to have been very bitter at this time in different parts of Ireland. Mr. Crookshank quotes Wesley in 1750 as saying: "That any of the Methodist preachers are alive is a clear proof of an overruling Providence, for we know not where we are safe. A week or two ago, in a time of perfect peace, twenty people assaulted one of our preachers near Limerick. He asked their captain what they intended to do. He calmly answered, 'To murder you,' and, accordingly, presented a pistol, which snapped twice or thrice." This was Mr. Michael Fenwick, "who then rode away. The others pursued and fired after him, but could not overtake him. Three of his companions they left for dead."⁹

Mr. Thomas Walsh was one of the early Irish converts to Methodism. Not long after his conversion he began to preach, and became one of the most earnest and consecrated itinerants. Robert Southey says of him, "The life of Thomas Walsh might almost convince a Catholic that saints are to be found in other communions as well as in the Church of Rome."¹⁰ However, his saintliness did not save him from hardships. His biographer, James Morgan, says that opposition was so violent at times that nothing "less than taking away his life was designed." He adds: "It may, perhaps, be tedious to enumerate all the instances. The following I set down abridged from his journal."¹¹

On January 4, 1750, he set out for Roscrea. About a mile from the town he met a company of men armed with clubs. Seventy men had been sworn on this occasion. At the first sight of them young Walsh was a little daunted, but he prayed, and was strengthened. He argued with them, and they consented to let him go on condition that he "swear never more to come to Roscrea." When he refused to promise they threatened to put him in a well, and hurried him into the town, where he

⁹C. H. Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, vol. i, p. 74.

¹⁰Robt. Southey, *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 283.

¹¹James Morgan, *Life of Thos. Walsh*, p. 73; this is reproduced in *Jackson's Lives*, vol. iii.

was surrounded "as by so many human wolves." Now the mob disagreed among themselves, so he was allowed to go.¹²

In June, 1750, he went to a town in the county of Cork, and about twenty miles from that city. He began to preach in the open under a tree. Being forbidden, he selected as his text, Job 21. 3: "Suffer me that I may speak; and after that I have spoken, mock on." The magistrate's sergeants, being astonished at the text, permitted him to finish.¹³

On his return into the town, however, he was seized by the officers and taken before the magistrate, who was a Mr. Ellis, and was also the rector of the parish. He let the preacher know that unless he would promise to preach no more in that town he would be committed to prison without delay. Mr. Walsh asked, "Are there no swearers, drunkards, Sabbath-breakers, and the like in these parts?" "Being answered, 'There are,' he added, 'If after he had preached there a few times, there appeared to be no reformation for the better amongst them, he would never come thither more.'" This challenge, however, was not taken, and he was ordered to prison. He preached from the windows of his cell to the people, who generally sympathized with him, and who provided him with bed and provisions. "It was not long before the magistrate sent to let him go."¹⁴

At a later date at Newtown, while he was at prayer on the church-green a mob of several hundred assembled. They caught him by the breast and pulled him violently to the ground. They dragged him through the mob and nearly choked him.¹⁵

Escaping from the mob, he went to another place to preach to the people, who were anxious to hear. But here he was attacked again, and compelled to retire. He then went to a little house at some distance in a garden, but again was obliged to flee. This time to escape his pursuers he made his way through wet

¹²Jackson's Lives, vol. iii, p. 91; also Coke and Moore, Life of Wesley, p. 301.

¹³Jackson's Lives, vol. iii, pp. 96ff.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., vol. iii, pp. 98ff.; also John Wesley, Journal, July 26, 1756.

meadows, and then climbed over the mountains till he reached the house of a friend, who cared for his wants. However, his tender constitution could not stand the strain and exposure, and in a few days he was obliged to take to his bed and was confined with a fever for some time.¹⁶

His energy and earnestness aroused the activities of the Catholic priests. His name was known in all their churches, and wherever it was at all probable that he would preach the priests endeavored to render him as obnoxious to the people as possible. Yet they themselves carefully avoided a debate with him. One priest assured his people "that he had been servant boy to a certain priest; and that having stolen his master's books, he learned to preach by that means." Another vehemently exclaimed, "As for that Walsh, who had some time before turned heretic, and went about preaching, he had been dead long ago; and that he, who then preached in this manner, was but the devil in his shape."¹⁷

About 1752 Mr. John Edwards was preaching in and about Dublin. "It was a time of great persecution. The rage of the adversary was often so violent as to place his life in the most imminent danger." At one time, as he was returning to the city from preaching in a neighboring village, the Ormond mob recognized him as "swaddling John," and declared their intention of throwing him over the bridge into the Liffey. This was observed by the Liberty mob on the opposite side of the river. They immediately encountered his assailants, rescued him out of their hands, and took him home in triumph, saying that "he was their swaddling John, for he lived on their side of the river, and none should hurt him."¹⁸

At another time, after preaching in the open, the "White Boys" beset the house to which he had gone, and threatened to burn it to the ground, unless he were turned out. Consequently, he was let down in a basket through a rear window, which

¹⁶Jackson's Lives, vol. iii, pp. 98ff.

¹⁷Ibid., vol. iii, pp. 101ff.

¹⁸Life of Countess of Huntingdon, vol. ii, p. 152.

opened into the garden of a justice of the peace who himself was "a bitter persecutor of the Methodists." Not knowing what else to do, he knocked boldly at the door of the magistrate, stated his circumstances, and appealed to his generosity for protection. His appeal had its desired, though unexpected, effect. The magistrate protected him, and entertained him hospitably for two days in his home.¹⁹

On one occasion some soldiers, who had been brought under his influence, were removed to another town, and they invited him thither to preach. He complied, but when about a mile or two from the town, the soldiers met him, and advised him with grief, that because of the "cruel threatenings of the people against his life," if he preached, they would not answer for his safety. Undismayed, however, he preached in the street. Among his audience were several persons of distinction, who by their presence and respectful behavior prevented any disturbance. After the service the mayor invited him to breakfast with several of the principal inhabitants, and told him that they were glad he had come; that the people were extremely dissolute in their manners, and the clergy, both Protestant and Catholic, were exceedingly remiss in their duty, and they hoped the Methodists would succeed in their endeavors to reform the town.²⁰

At Derg-bridge, in 1772, a Mr. Brown was assaulted while preaching. One man was sent to "pull the fellow down. . . . He looked! he listened! and returned, saying, 'I will not, for he is a pretty man, and is preaching the word of God.'" A more savage man then advanced and asked some questions. The answers not satisfying him, a struggle ensued. The lights were extinguished, and in the darkness Mr. Brown escaped through a window.²¹

In 1773, "when Mr. John Smith was riding within two or three miles of Killashandra, he was met by a minister, who, in a most insulting manner, said to him, 'How dare you go about

¹⁹Life of Countess of Huntingdon, vol. ii, p. 153.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Arminian Magazine, 1784, p. 578.

preaching, frightening the whole country out of their senses, and thinning my congregations?" "To which the evangelist replied that instead of turning the brains of the people, he only endeavored to turn their hearts to the Lord, thus teaching them true wisdom." Upon this "the minister in a rage called him a scoundrel and a canting rascal and horsewhipped him unmercifully."²²

On March 4, 1773, "Mr. John MacBurney was invited to preach at Mr. Perry's within a few miles of Enniskillen. In the evening while the congregation was singing a hymn, a large mob beset the house. Six of these rushed in armed with clubs, and immediately fell upon the people. But many of them joining together, thrust the rioters out, and shut and fastened the door. On this they broke every pane of glass in the windows, and threw in a large quantity of stones. They then broke into the house through a weak part of the wall, and hauling out both men and women, beat them without mercy. Soon after they dragged out Mr. MacBurney, whom they instantly knocked down. They continued beating him on the head and breast while he lay senseless on the ground. Yet, after a while, coming a little to himself, he got up; not being quite sensible, he staggered and fell again. Then one of them set his foot upon his face, swearing, 'he would tread the Holy Ghost out of him.' Another ran his stick into his mouth. As soon as he could speak he said, 'May God forgive you, I do.' They then set him on his horse, and one of the ruffians got up behind him and forced him to gallop down the rocky mountain to the town. There they kept him till a gentleman took him out of their hands, and entertained and lodged him in the most hospitable manner. But his bruises, on the head and breast particularly, would not suffer him to sleep. After lingering a few years, he died at Clones, in consequence of this treatment."²³

²²C. H. Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, vol. i, p. 269.

²³Coke and Moore, *Life of John Wesley*, pp. 305ff.; also John Wesley, *Journal*, May 24, 1773; also C. H. Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, vol. i, pp. 271ff.

In 1779 Mr. William Myles, who later wrote a *Chronological History of Methodism*, was en route to Kirkeel. When near the place some friends met him with the information that a mob was waiting to apprehend him and send him on board a tender that was lying in the harbor, it being in time of war. However, knowing himself innocent of any crime, he went forward. The mob only stared at him and allowed him to pass. But in the evening they surrounded the house where he was preaching. But the preacher escaped without injury.

On another occasion he was at Dromore, and preached in the street. An excise officer went out of a public house, where he had been drinking, and swore that he would kill him. He drew a sword out of his cane and made a thrust at him, but the innkeeper, perceiving his intention, struck his arm and broke the blow. Mr. Myles exhorted the congregation to peace and finished his sermon.²⁴

When Mr. James Hall was on the Athlone Circuit, in 1779 or 1780, he was informed that the preacher "in the next circuit had been used exceedingly ill, and that his life was in danger by the injuries he had received from a set of ruffians." He went over to see him, and found him recovering, though he was scarcely able to walk. "His hair had been torn off his head by handfuls, and his right arm and leg were dreadfully bruised by the blows he had received," the effects of which he must feel "to the day of his death."²⁵ Mr. Hall received the following account of the occurrence:

A justice of the peace, who could not prevail upon his wife and daughter to forsake the Methodists, determined to resort to other measures. Consequently, "he hired twenty-four papists, and divided them into three companies; these were stationed upon the three roads leading to the place where our friend was to preach, in order to waylay him. They had proper instructions for their proceedings from their inhuman master."²⁶

²⁴Methodist Magazine, 1797, pp. 261ff.

²⁵Account of James Hall, pp. 55ff.; Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. ccxxxiv.

²⁶Ibid.

“The preacher was unapprised of any danger till he found himself surrounded by eight ruffians, who instantly knocked him off his horse, and beat him most cruelly with their knotted sticks for some time. They then produced a book, and insisted that the preacher should swear upon it that he never would preach in that place any more. This he could not with a good conscience agree to. The papists then drew their knives, swearing ‘they would cut the heart out of his body.’ They tore and cut his clothes all to pieces, and when they had stripped him stark-naked, except only a part of one of his boots, they dragged him by the hair of his head down a field into a pond of water, beating him with their sticks all the way, and there left him to perish. . . . When the preacher recovered his senses he found himself naked and sorely wounded; but by the good providence of God he was enabled to crawl to a friend’s house about the distance of two miles from the place where he had suffered these cruelties.”²⁷

The wounded preacher told Mr. Hall that he had a large congregation and a lively society, and requested him to preach to them, as he himself could not. This Mr. Hall agreed to do. He says: “Accordingly at the time appointed I went there with the intention of spending two days among them. The first evening we met with no interruption, but the next day as we were upon the road three savages, vulgarly called gentlemen, with their footmen, suddenly surrounded us. One part of them rushed upon a young man, a volunteer, who was one of our company and took his sword and pistols from him. Another part of the gang fell upon two young men, farmer’s sons, but they escaped into a house, and there secured themselves. One of the gentlemen, who had got the pistols from the volunteer, then rode up to me, insisting that I should promise to go about my business, and never return to preach at that place any more. I answered ‘that we could not enter into any such engagement, so long as we regarded the salvation of our souls or that of others.’ He then swore that he would instantly lodge the contents of the

²⁷Account of James Hall, pp. 55ff.; Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. ccxxxiv.

pistol in my body. I replied 'that I knew there were two balls in that pistol, but if I could not preserve my life without sinning against my conscience, he might fire when he pleased, for I was not in the least afraid to die.' He then cocked the pistol and presented it to my breast, swearing he would shoot me dead upon the spot. I opened my bosom to receive the discharge, which I expected every moment. The gentleman, finding that I was not to be terrified with his threats, then took the sword, and lifting it up to heaven, swore by the eternal God that he would split me in two; and immediately made a stroke at me. But the glittering of the sword frightened my horse, and he gave a spring at that moment, which probably saved my life. I felt the sword glaze upon my back, but the saddle received the blow.²⁸

Mr. Hall then began to reason with him on the injustice and cruelty of his conduct. He tried to show him that it was his duty to protect strangers, rather than to assassinate them. He insisted upon being taken before a magistrate; that, if he was guilty of any wrong, he should be sent to prison. They agreed and started for a magistrate. On the way they noticed a number of men planting potatoes. The gentlemen called to them to bring their forks and spades and beat the preacher. The poor wretches readily obeyed, and "sprang over the ditch as fierce as tigers." But Mr. Hall informed them that he was a licensed preacher, and that, if any assaulted him, they must expect to be punished according to law. At this the men were confounded, and stood gaping and staring at one another. The gentlemen with vociferations and execrations tried to persuade them to fall upon their victims. Failing in this, they began to beat the poor men, who "were glad to throw down their working tools and scamper over the ditch as fast as possible to save their own bones."²⁹

They had another argument then, and the preacher persuaded the assailants that it was worse than a heathen to con-

²⁸Account of James Hall, pp. 55ff.

²⁹Ibid.

demn a man unheard. They then swore that "they would go and hear what the honest black devil had to say." On the road two of the gentlemen saw their mother approaching, who was anxious for the consequences, should they injure the preacher. They exclaimed, "We shall break her heart," and left the preacher and his company to themselves.³⁰

He went on and met the congregation, which was very large and greatly excited, for they had heard of what had happened. After preaching to the people the society entreated them with many tears not to forsake them.³¹

They endeavored to take the matter into the courts, and to secure the arrest of the persecutors, but finally by the advice of the injured preacher, who feared that because of complications nothing could be done, the matter was dropped.

³⁰Account of James Hall, pp. 55ff.

³¹Ibid.

CHAPTER VIII

VIOLENCE IN IRELAND

THE first Methodist Society in Ireland was organized in 1746, by Mr. Thomas Williams.¹ In 1747 John Wesley visited the island and remained from the 9th to the 23rd of August. On the 9th he preached at Saint Mary's Church, Dublin. The next morning he visited the curate of the church, who commended his sermon of the previous day in strong terms, and begged that he might see him again the next morning. At the same time, however, the curate expressed "the most rooted prejudice against lay preachers, or preaching out of a church, and said the Archbishop of Dublin was resolved to suffer no such irregularities in his diocese." On the 11th Wesley waited upon the Archbishop at Newbridge, ten miles from Dublin, with whom he spent two or three hours, and answered many objections.

On Sunday, the 16th, as he left the choir of Christ Church, where he attended, he observed nearly the whole congregation drawn up in rows in the body of the church from one end to the other, who stared at him as he passed out among them, but scarcely any spoke either good or bad.² At his preaching services he had large congregations. Returning to England, at Garth Wesley met his brother going to Ireland.

Charles Wesley landed at Dublin September 9, 1747, and remained in the country till March 20, 1748.³

As in England, mobs were common in Ireland. It was not difficult, therefore, to direct their attacks against the Methodists, or against any other society that might meet with popular disfavor. Charles Wesley, who, as we have seen, spent over six

¹Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol. i, pp. 556ff.

²John Wesley, *Journal*, August 9ff., 1747.

³Charles Wesley, *Journal*, September 9, 1747.

months in Ireland, exclaimed, "Woe is me now, for my soul is wearied because of murders, which this city [Dublin] is full of!" He adds: "The Ormond mob and liberty mob seldom part till one or more are killed. A poor constable was the last whom they beat and dragged about till they had killed him, and then hung him up in triumph. None was called in question for it, but the earth covered his blood. Last week a woman was beaten to death by the rabble, but that was all fair, for she was caught picking a pocket: so there is an end of her." He then adds, "No wonder if in such a place there should be no justice for Christians!"⁴ Under these conditions it is not surprising that there was trouble for the Methodists.

As is noticed, John Wesley left the island on August 23, 1747. Rioting against the Methodists began at Dublin on the following Sunday, August 30. "A mob of papists and Protestants assaulted the house where the society was met after evening service. They met them going out with sticks and stones, knocked down several, both men and women, and beat them in a barbarous manner. Some escaped the back way; others retreated to the house and shut the door. The mob broke it open, and another inward door, tore down the desk and forms, carried two large counters, chairs, and part of the wainscoting into the street, and openly burnt all but what they stole."⁵

"There was a warehouse over the preaching-room, which they broke open and ransacked. Above one hundred pounds worth of goods they seized as lawful prize, and committed the rest to the flames."⁶

"They have often threatened our lives. Mr. Paterson they knocked down, and cut in several places while on the ground; then threw him into a cellar, and cast stones on him. Mrs. Young and many others were treated in the same manner. Half-hour past nine the mayor came with his guard, and saw with his

⁴Charles Wesley, *Journal*, September 15, 1747; also C. H. Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, vol. i, pp. 17ff.

⁵Charles Wesley, *Journal*, September 17, 1747.

⁶*Ibid.*

own eyes the havoc the mob had made. He readily granted warrants to apprehend them. Some of the poorest, papists mostly, were sent to Newgate; but the better sort made a mock of his authority, and walked about the town from alehouse to alehouse with the constables, whom by drink and money they had secured of their party.”⁷

The trial of the persecutors did not take place till after the arrival of Charles Wesley in Ireland. On September 17 he heard that the grand jury had thrown out the bill.⁸ On the 19th he dined at Mr. Aggit’s and found him “full of indignation at the injustice of the jury,” and not without reason, for this miscarriage of justice exposed the Methodists to the unrelenting fury of the mobs.⁹ Mr. Crookshank tells us that in a letter to John Wesley Mr. John Trembath, the stationed preacher, says “that all the city was in an uproar; the lives of the Methodists were in imminent peril; some of the citizens said it was a shame to treat them thus, and others that the dogs deserved to be hanged, and the magistrates refused to interfere.”¹⁰ And Coke and Moore, quoting from this same letter adds: “We were like sheep driven by the wolf into the fold. When we went out we carried our lives in our hands.”¹¹ And, indeed, it was so. “A poor, weakly man, of Mr. Cennick’s society was so abused by his neighbor, who knocked him down, and stamped upon his stomach, that he died soon after. The murderer was indeed brought to a trial, but acquitted as usual.”¹²

During Charles Wesley’s stay in Dublin he was frequently insulted by mobs. On September 23 he heard that on the previous Sunday, after he had gone, a Catholic mob fell upon the women, but were beaten off by the soldiers.¹³ On the 28th the landlady nailed up their preaching place, which cost them a day

⁷Charles Wesley, Journal, September 17, 1747.

⁸Ibid., September 17, 1747.

⁹Ibid., September 19, 1747.

¹⁰C. H. Crookshank, History of Methodism in Ireland, vol. i, p. 18.

¹¹Coke and Moore, Life of John Wesley, p. 288.

¹²Charles Wesley, Journal, September 15, 1747.

¹³Ibid., September 23, 1747.

of time before they could open it.¹⁴ On October 30 they were stoned for the length of a street or two. At this time Wesley received his first blow after arriving in Dublin.¹⁵ On November 12, upon hearing that the minister had procured a mob to hinder their preaching, Wesley would not allow any of the preachers or people to expose themselves at Hanbury-lane. At night, however, the mob, having waited in vain for them till then, broke into the house and took possession of it.¹⁶ Wesley said that in Dublin there were very many who longed to hear the word but were kept away by fear. He adds: "Neither is their fear groundless, for unless the jury find the bill against the rioters, murder there will surely be; and if it begin, it will not end with us."¹⁷

In June, 1752, a large mob assaulted the new preaching-house at Dublin, and did considerable damage.¹⁸ The rioters were arrested but were acquitted by a packed jury. Ten or eleven of the jurors were Catholics, and these frightened the other so that he did not contradict.¹⁹ The arrest, however, of itself seemed to have a wholesome effect, as it struck terror into the hearts of the mob. The Methodists were then permitted to walk through the principal streets of Dublin unmolested.²⁰

Another terrible riot occurred here on Sunday, July 3, 1757, at which time Whitefield suffered severely at the hands of a brutal rabble.²¹

During part of 1749 and 1750 Cork experienced brutal and inhuman riots. These outrages were led by a vagabond ballad singer, Nicholas Butler by name, who seemed so utterly depraved as to delight in the most brutal outrages. In Ireland the Methodists were called swaddlers from one of the preachers using the

¹⁴Charles Wesley, *Journal*, September 28, 1747.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, October 30, 1747.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, November 12, 1747; also above, p. 107.

¹⁷John Wesley, *Works*, Letter to E. Blackwell, September 17, 1747.

¹⁸John Wesley, Letter to Ebenezer Brackwell, July 20, 1752.

¹⁹John Wesley, *Journal*, July 20, 1752.

²⁰John Wesley, *Works*, Letter to E. Blackwell.

²¹C. H. Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, vol. i, p. 119; also above, pp. 59ff.

text, which speaks of the Babe wrapped in "swaddling clothes." Butler and his mob seemed to have been commissioned to drive the "swaddlers" out of Cork, by means as foul as his brutal nature could devise.²² He dressed himself "in a parson's gown and bands, and with a Bible in one hand and a bundle of ballads in the other, he went through the street, singing ballads and selling 'doggerel rhymes, stuffed with the vilest lies respecting the Methodists.'" ²³ By this means he aroused the people to follow and support him in deeds of violence. Fortunately, however, by the time of these outbreaks, Methodism had become so thoroughly established and fortified that it passed through this persecution with but little loss.

In August, 1748, Charles Wesley says: "Much good has been done in this place. Outward wickedness has disappeared, outward religion succeeded. Swearing is seldom heard on the streets; the churches and altars are crowded, to the astonishment of our adversaries. Yet some of our clergy, and all of the Catholic priests, take wretched pains to hinder their people from hearing us."²⁴ A few days later he was "set upon in the street by a Romish priest for words, which he was told one of our preachers spoke against him." Wesley tried to undeceive him, but without success. The next day he defended the Methodists "from that slander that they rail against the clergy."²⁵ On September 5 "innumerable stories are invented to stop the work, or rather repeated, for they are the same we have heard a thousand times. . . . All manner of wickedness is acted in our society, except the eating of little children."²⁶ On the 13th he adds: "I marvel not that Satan hates us. We never meet but some or other is plucked out of his teeth."²⁷

Just when the riots broke out at Cork is not given. How-

²²John Wesley, *Journal*, May 25, 1750.

²³Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 37.

²⁴Charles Wesley, *Journal*, August 21, 1748.

²⁵*Ibid.*, August 27, 1748.

²⁶*Ibid.*, September 5, 1748.

²⁷*Ibid.*, September 13, 1748.

ever, Mr. John Gaulter says that in November, 1748, Mr. Crownley went there "where he preached at the peril of his life."²⁸ On May 3, 1749, while going down the street, Elizabeth Holleran saw Nicholas Butler on a table with the Bible in one hand and ballads in the other.²⁹ She expressed some concern thereat, whereupon Sheriff Reilly ordered his bailiff to take her to the bridewell. Afterward she was taken to prison, where she remained from eight o'clock in the evening of the 3rd till twelve o'clock on the 5th.³⁰ On the same day Butler and his mob assembled before the house of Thomas Jones, a merchant. And in the evening they went to the house where the Methodists were holding service, and as the people were leaving they threw dirt and hurt several of them.

On May 4 Thomas Jones with some others went to the mayor, told him what had been done, and asked him to stop the rioting. He gave his word and honor that "there should be no more of it." However, that same night a larger mob than ever went to the house where the Methodists were, threw dirt and stones at the people while they were in the house, and when they went out fell upon both men and women with dirt, stones, clubs, hangers, and swords, so that many were considerably wounded.

The next day Mr. Jones went again to the mayor, and told him of what had happened on the previous night, and that Butler had declared that on this night there should be a greater

²⁸Jackson's Lives, vol. ii, p. 11.

²⁹NOTE—This account is taken largely from the works of John Wesley. He was at Cork before the riots began, passed through the city during the riots, and visited the place immediately after the disturbances were ended. His account is a copy of depositions by Methodist laymen who had suffered at the hands of the mob. For other accounts the reader is referred to William Myles, Chronological History of People Called Methodists, pp. 62ff.; Coke and Moore, Life of John Wesley, pp. 290ff.; Tyerman, Life and Times of John Wesley, vol. ii, pp. 37ff, 80ff.; C. H. Crookshank, History of Methodism in Ireland, vol. i, pp. 51ff.; William Smith, History of Methodism in Ireland, pp. 19ff.; and Methodist Magazine, 1812, pp. 44ff. or 26ff. This author's wife was a girl in Cork at the time of the persecutions.

³⁰John Wesley, Works, Letter to Rev. Mr. Baily. The description of the events which follows is taken from this source.

mob than ever. Again the mayor promised to prevent it, and again the mob assembled and beat and abused the people so that they were covered with dirt and blood. John Stockdale, seeing his wife on the ground and the mob abusing her, entreated them not to kill her. Then one of them beat him with a large stick, as they did many others, so that he was hurt in several places, and "his face a gore of blood." Mr. Jones took the mayor to the place, where he saw "many of the people covered with dirt and blood." There were still some of the people remaining in the house, who were driven out to the mob in the presence of the mayor, by two sheriffs and an alderman, who then nailed up the doors of the house.

From the 6th to the 16th of May the mob assembled every day but one before the home of Daniel Sullivan, a baker, and abused all who went to his shop, to the great damage of his business. On the 16th Butler took a large mob and abused all that went to the house, and the mayor walked by while he was doing this, but did not hinder him. The mob afterward broke his windows, and threw dirt and stones into his shop, and spoiled a large quantity of his goods. Also, from the 16th to the 28th the mob assembled every day before this house. On the 28th Butler swore that they would come the next day and "pull down the house of that 'heretic dog,' and called aloud to the mob, 'Let the heretic dogs indict you: I will bring you all off without a farthing cost!'"

Accordingly, the mob assembled. Mr. Sullivan went to the mayor, who, after much urging, walked with him down the street. But "when they were in the midst of the mob, the mayor said aloud: 'It is your own fault for entertaining these preachers. If you will turn them out of your house, I will engage there shall be no more harm done; but if you will not turn them out, you must take what you will get.'" After further, but futile conversation, the mayor told him that the Methodists were not tolerated, and advised him to go into his house and shut the doors. This he did, but the mob continued to break his windows and throw stones till near midnight.

On May 31 the mob assembled before the Methodist preaching house and threw dirt and stones into the house, which obliged the congregation to lock themselves in. The mob then broke down the doors, and, as the people were going out, hurt, beat, bruised, or cut many of them so that they bled profusely. Mr. Sullivan had gone to the mayor seeking his protection, which he again declined to give, though he saw passing by him some that had been bruised and wounded. Later the mob tore up the benches, pews, and floor of the meeting house, burned part of it in the street, and carried away the remainder. After this damage was done the mayor sent a party of soldiers to guard the walls.

These riots continued all through the month of June. However, now the mob seems to have gone from house to house. On the 12th Ann Cooshea, while at her father's house, was called a vile and vulgar name, and struck on the head with a stone and rendered senseless for some time; Ann Wright was struck in the face with a stone, and fled from her own home, leaving the goods of her shop to be spoiled; Thomas Burnet, while at work in his master's shop, was struck on the side with a stone which disabled him for more than a week, and his wife, without any provocation, was struck so severely that she was obliged to take to her bed, and a year later she had not fully recovered.

"Margaret Griffin, of Cork, deposes, that on the 24th of June, as this deponent was about her business, Butler and his mob came up, took hold on her, tore her clothes, struck her several times, and cut her mouth; that after she broke from him, he and his mob pursued her to her house, and would have broken in had not some neighbors interposed: that he had beat and abused her several times before, and one of those times to such a degree, that she was all in a gore of blood, and continued spitting blood for several days after." On this same day Jacon Conner was beaten till a gentleman interposed.

On the 29th Ann Hughes asked Butler why he had broken open her house on the 21st. Thereupon he called her many abusive names, being attended by his mob, dragged her up and

down, tore her clothes, and with his sword stabbed and cut both her arms. On the same day and the day following the mob assaulted the house of Daniel Flint with drawn swords. He believed that had not some one interfered, he would have been murdered.

On the 30th the mob attacked Mary Fuller, a widow, at her shop, and threatened her life. She fled from them, leaving her goods in their hands, many of which they destroyed. They also assaulted the shop of Margaret Trimmell, bruised her arm with a club, drew their swords and threatened her life, cut her goods, threw some into the street, carried some away, and threw dirt and stones into her shop.

The Methodists, finding that it was useless to attempt to oppose Butler through the magistrates, patiently submitted to suffer whatever he and his mob might choose to inflict upon them till the time for the court to convene. They hoped through this to receive relief. Consequently, twenty-eight depositions were drawn up, from which the above is taken, and laid before the grand jury, August 19. But they did not find any one of these bills. Instead of this, they made that "memorable presentment" as follows: "We find and present Charles Wesley to be a person of ill fame, a vagabond, and a common disturber of his Majesty's peace; and we pray he may be transported." And the same presentment was found against James Williams, Robert Swindle, Jonathan Reeves, James Wheatley, John Larwood, Joseph M'Auliff (which is said to be a mistake for Joseph Crownley), Charles Skelton, William Tooker, and Daniel Sullivan. These were all preachers except Daniel Sullivan, who was a respectable citizen. His crime was that he had received the preachers into his house.³¹

Butler and his mob were now in high spirits. They paraded the streets day and night, "frequently hallooing as they went along, 'Five pounds for a Swaddler's head!'" Butler declared

³¹John Wesley, *Journal*, August 19, 1749; William Myles, *Chronological History of Methodism*, pp. 68ff.

to them all that "he had full liberty now to do whatever he would even to murder, if he pleased."³²

The court that convened at Cork on October 5 produced another "memorable presentment": "We find and present John Horton to be a person of ill fame, a vagabond, and a common disturber of his Majesty's peace; and we pray that he may be transported." Complaint was made that this presentment was wholly illegal, and it was dropped.

Shortly after this Butler went to Dublin and tried to sing his ballads there, but having little success, he returned to Cork. In January, 1750, he began to "scour the streets again," pursuing the Methodists with a large mob at his heels, who were "armed with swords, staves, and pistols." Again complaint was made to the mayor, and again "the riots were not suppressed; nay, they not only continued but increased."³³

On February 23 Butler and his mob assaulted the home of William Jewell, a clothier. They beat his wife and broke the windows of his house. On the 26th the mob went to the home of Mary Phillips, whom they abused "in the grossest terms," and then struck her a blow on the head, which stunned her. And on the 28th Elizabeth Gardelet, wife of a soldier, as she was going out of her house was assaulted by Butler and his mob. Butler struck her on the side of the head with both his fists, which knocked her against a wall. He then pursued her, and struck her several times in the face. In her efforts to escape she ran into a school yard for shelter. At this Butler caught hold of her, and with a vile epithet, said, "'You stand on consecrated ground,' and threw her with such force across the lane that she was driven against the opposite wall. . . . When she had recovered herself a little she made the best of her way to her

³²John Wesley, Works, Letter to Rev. Mr. Baily, par. 12.

³³Ibid., pars. 13, 14, and 15.

NOTE—Whitefield received news on January 3 that Butler was again "making havoc of the people." He adds, "I have been with some, who will go to the Speaker of the House of Commons and represent the case." (George Whitefield, Letter to the Rev. Mr. C., London, January 3, 1750.)

lodging"; but Butler "still pursued, and overtook her as she was going up the stairs. . . . He struck her with his fist on the stomach, which stroke knocked her down backward," and, "falling with the small of her back against the edge of one of the stairs, she was not able to rise again." "Her pains immediately came upon her, and about two in the morning she miscarried."³⁴

Depositions to the above facts were presented to the grand jury in April, but they did not find cause for any true bill, but they found a bill against Daniel Sullivan, Jr., for discharging a pistol without a ball over the heads of the rioters while they were pelting him with stones.³⁵

At the session of this court the Methodists appeared who had previously been indicted as vagabonds. "The preachers assembled at the house of Mr. Jones, and went from thence in a body to the court, accompanied by Mr. Jones and other reputable inhabitants. His Majesty's judge behaved as became him. He inquired where were the persons presented" as vagabonds. "On their being pointed out to him, he was for some time visibly agitated, and unable to proceed. He at length called for the evidence, on which Butler appeared."³⁶ "The judge, looking at him with a suspicious eye, asked what his calling was. The worthless fellow hung down his head and sheepishly replied, 'I sing ballads, my lord.'³⁷ The judge lifted up his hands in surprise, and said, 'Here are six gentlemen, indicted as vagabonds, and the first accuser is a vagabond by profession.' A second witness, being called, was asked the same question. He impudently answered, 'I am

³⁴John Wesley, Works, Letter to Rev. Mr. Baily, par. 15; also John Wesley, Journal, April 14, 1750.

³⁵Ibid., par. 16.

³⁶Ibid., par. 17; also Coke and Moore, Life of John Wesley, pp. 293ff.

³⁷NOTE—In the early part of June, 1750, Butler was in Waterford raising disturbances. (John Wesley, Journal, June 13, 1750.) Here he found others as brutal as himself. In a brawl with some of these Butler received injuries, that cost him his right arm. Being thus disabled, the poor, deluded fellow dragged out the remainder of his life in extreme misery. (William Smith, History of Methodism in Ireland, p. 34.) He fled to Dublin, and Mr. Taylor, while there, was informed that "the Methodists supported him, or he might have famished." (Methodist Magazine, 1812, p. 27 or 45.)

an anti-swaddler, my lord.' The judge resented the insolence, and ordered the buffoon out of court." He declared that it was an insult to the court to bring such a case before him, and dismissed the accused.³⁸

After this it was supposed that there would be no more disturbances at Cork. However, Wesley was not so sure that the spirit of persecution could thus easily be quieted. He soon had occasion to learn that he had rightly judged. On May 19 he was again in Cork as the guest of Alderman Pembrock. The next morning, which was Sunday, understanding that the house where preaching was generally held would not contain the people that would want to hear him, he preached in the open without disturbance. He intended to preach here again at five, but there were rumors of opposition by the mayor, which was confirmed by two messengers, whom he sent to ask the mayor's consent.³⁹ Consequently soon after five he began preaching in the house. While he was preaching the mayor's drummers and sergeants went with a mob to the preaching house and drummed till the end of the service. When Wesley left the house he was immediately surrounded by the mob. He asked one of the sergeants to protect him, but received the reply, "Sir, I have no orders to do that." He escaped without injury, but "many of the congregation were roughly handled, particularly Mr. Jones, who was covered with dirt, and escaped with his life almost by miracle." The mob then carried out the seats and benches, doors and window and window frames, tore up the floor—indeed, all the woodwork that remained. Part of this they carried off for their own use and the rest they burned in the street.⁴⁰

The next day "from three in the afternoon till after seven the mob of Cork marched in grand procession," and burned Wesley in effigy. On Tuesday "the mob and drummers were moving again between three and four in the morning." That evening they attacked Mr. Stockdale's house and broke all the

³⁸Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 40.

³⁹John Wesley, *Works*, Letter to the Rev. Mr. Baily, par. 18.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, par. 20.

windows and most of the window frames. The next day they broke down the boards that he had nailed up at his windows, destroyed what frames and shutters remained, and damaged a considerable part of his goods.⁴¹ On Friday and Saturday, as had occurred for several days, "one Roger O'Ferrall fixed up an advertisement at the public Exchange, that he was ready to head any mob in order to pull down any house that should dare to harbor a Swaddler." On the 30th Wesley was back in Cork again, and preached to the soldiers at the Barracks. After the sermon the soldiers conducted him to his lodgings at Alderman Pembrock's, the mob not molesting.⁴²

Wesley summarizes these persecutions at Cork as follows: Do not "continue to put persecution in the place of reason; either private persecution, stirring up husbands to threaten or beat their wives, parents their children, masters their servants; gentlemen to ruin their tenants, laborers, or tradesmen by turning them out of their farms or cottages, employing or buying of them no more because they worship God according to their own conscience; or open, barefaced, noontday, Cork persecution, breaking open the houses of his Majesty's Protestant subjects, destroying their goods, spoiling or tearing the very clothes from their backs; striking, bruising, wounding, murdering them in the streets; dragging them through the mire without any regard to age or sex: not sparing even those of tender years; no, nor women, though great with child; but, with more than Pagan or Moham-medan barbarity, destroying infants that were yet unborn."⁴³

All this suffering could have been avoided simply by renouncing Methodism and their faith in the saving grace of God through Jesus Christ. But this they steadfastly refused to do, choosing rather to suffer persecution than to offend their consciences, or to neglect what they firmly believed to be the way of life, and for the good of mankind.⁴⁴

⁴¹John Wesley, Works, Letter to the Rev. Mr. Baily, pars. 21 and 22.

⁴²Ibid., par. 22.

⁴³Ibid., part iii, par. 13.

⁴⁴Ibid., part i, par. 4.

At Waterford, in 1750, a mob pursued the Methodists to their own doors, and pelted them with dirt and stones.⁴⁵ Again, in 1773, a mob of Catholics assaulted the Methodists while in one of their meetings. They knocked down John Christian and several more, who endeavored to quiet them. But officers interfered, so that in the end the rioters suffered more than the Methodists.⁴⁶

In the vicinity of Sidare and Knockmanoul lived a barbarous youth who was fond of violence. He became the leader in his neighborhood of the persecutors of the Methodists "and cruelly maltreated all who came within his reach, not sparing even his aged mother, whom he dragged out of one of the meetings." He beat all who dared to interfere with his brutality. During a service at Knockmanoul, in 1768, this youth "collected a mob of about one hundred persons, called loudly for his mother and sisters, and began to belabor those about the door, breaking the jawbone of George Magee." This led to resistance which put the cowardly barbarian and his mob to flight. At Sidare, in 1771, this young man broke into the house of Mr. Armstrong, where a prayer-meeting was in progress. He struck several with a loaded whip, which he carried. Miss Nancy Armstrong, however, was his chief object of attack, for he accused her of making his sister a Methodist.⁴⁷ He struck her a blow on the temple with his whip, which rendered her senseless for several hours. Wesley thought that he intended to kill her. From the effects of that blow she never fully recovered.⁴⁸

The Methodists soon observed the cowardice of this youth, and determined to put an end to his outrages. Hence William Little, a preacher, went to him and told him that unless he promised to change his course, he would give him a good thrashing. He not only ceased himself to molest, but used his influence

⁴⁵John Wesley, *Journal*, June 15, 1750.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, April 24, 1773.

⁴⁷C. H. Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, vol. i, pp. 217ff.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*; also John Wesley, *Journal*, July 7, 1771.

now to check other disturbers. Thus peace was restored from this mob.⁴⁹

But opposition arose in another quarter. "Several of the younger members of the Henderson family, at Drumbulcan, having become Methodists, were very harshly treated by their parents. They were locked up in their rooms, received but little food, and were severely beaten, yet persisted in attending the services. Miss Henderson was obliged to leave home for a time, and retire to the house of Mr. Little, near Florence Court. Her father brought a clergyman to reason with her, who failed to move the young convert." Then the parents tried to drive out of the community the two preachers who were there, but this also failed. Finally, however, "Miss Henderson's family were induced to attend the preaching of the word. Several, if not all, were brought into the society, and she had the heartfelt satisfaction of seeing them walk in the ways of the Lord."⁵⁰

Enniskillen and vicinity were also the scene of bitter persecution. In 1773 Wesley in company with several friends passed through the town. For the sake of safety they separated into groups. Wesley escaped without injury, but some of his friends were not so fortunate. John Smith received "a shower of dirt and stones," which left him "pretty much daubed and bruised."⁵¹

At Roosky Wesley received an account of the suffering of some of his people at Achalun, a village six or seven miles from Enniskillen. While they were singing a hymn in a private house a large mob assembled, six of whom rushed into the house, armed with clubs, and fell upon the people. They were thrust out and the door fastened. Whereupon they broke every pane of glass in the windows, and threw in a large quantity of stones. They then broke through a weak part of the wall, and hauled out both men and women, whom they beat without mercy.⁵²

The Methodists secured warrants for the arrest of six of

⁴⁹C. H. Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, vol. i, pp. 217ff.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁵¹John Wesley, *Journal*, May 24, 1773.

⁵²*Ibid.*

the rioters, but the constable would not take them, and shortly after the grand jury threw out all the bills. After this a Methodist preacher could not pass through the Protestant town of Enniskillen without endangering his life.⁵³

In time, however, all this bitterness passed away. In 1787 Wesley preached in the market house at Enniskillen, "formerly a den of lions," but now the people "flocked together from every part and were all attention."⁵⁴

At Tonyloman two members of the society were so severely beaten that they died from the effects. This, however, attracted public attention, and the perpetrators of the outrage were arrested at the instigation of the local magistrate.⁵⁵

The above are a few examples of what those of Ireland suffered who desired to cast in their lots with the Methodists. Crookshank adds: "Almost every hand was lifted against the Methodists. The aristocracy opposed them; the clergy both in and out of the pulpit railed at them; and the magistrates, in general, not only denied them a hearing but in some instances were amongst their most bitter persecutors. The bonds of friendship were severed; family ties broken, and young men and women driven from the homes of their fathers to seek shelter elsewhere. The preachers especially were the objects of hatred and malignity. In some instances, brave men armed with guns and bayonets, and carrying a supply of provisions, escorted the servants of God traveling byroads in order to escape attacks from lawless mobs. Mr. G. Irwin, of Magheralough, and others, often thus acted as a body-guard to the itinerants."⁵⁶

All this they endured for the sake of what they steadfastly believed. If they had chosen to forsake their faith and the pure lives which they lived, and had given themselves to blasphemy, drunkenness, adultery, obscenity, low and vulgar jests, and all manner of vileness, not a hand would have been lifted against

⁵³C. H. Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, vol. i, p. 271.

⁵⁴John Wesley, *Journal*, May 30, 1787.

⁵⁵C. H. Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, vol. i, p. 268.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 268.

them.⁵⁷ But they determined in their hearts to live pure lives, and to teach to others the gospel that had led themselves to forsake impurity and obscenity, and to seek the pure and the good. And they counted not their lives dear to themselves, provided they could thus live nobly, and persuade others to imitate their examples. Hence they suffered.

⁵⁷C. H. Crookshank, *History of Methodism in Ireland*, vol. i, p. 267.

CHAPTER IX

THE PRESS GANGS

IN England the eighteenth century was a period of unrest and turbulence. The century began with danger from the Pretender. In 1688, by the consent and solicitation of the people, William and Mary came over from Holland and ascended the English throne, while King James, forsaken even by his own daughters, fled to France. He, however, still claimed the throne. He died in 1701, and his claim, therefore, descended to his son, James Edward. In 1715, being supported by France, James Edward made an attempt by force of arms to seize the throne. This insurrection was speedily suppressed, but the support of France made the claims of the Pretender a real menace. And, if at a later time, the old Pretender, as James Edward came to be called, seemed to become less a source of unrest, his son, Charles Edward, who came to be known as the young Pretender, was more determined and active. For several years there were rumors of another effort to seize the throne, and a corresponding fear. These suspicions were realized on August 2, 1745, when Charles landed on the Scottish coast, and called the Jacobites to his standard. He was not defeated till April 27, 1746, but then made good his escape back to France, from whence he continued his efforts to foment an uprising in favor of the Catholic Stuarts.

This dread of the Pretender, together with continental struggles, made necessary a large army, and the magistrates were enforcing a law, passed in 1706 (4 & 5 Anne, cap. 21), "for the better recruiting Her Majesty's Army and Marines," which gave the power to justices, assisted by their subordinates, 'to raise and levy such able-bodied men, as have not any lawful calling or

employment or visible means for their maintenance and livelihood, to serve as soldiers.'"¹

Moreover, this danger of the Pretender intensified the feeling against the Methodists, for they were falsely accused of being disloyal. It was published all over the land that Wesley was a popish emissary in disguise, and a secret supporter of the Pretender. He tells us at Saint Ives, Cornwall, it was vehemently asserted of him that he had taken the Pretender with him in the previous autumn as a Methodist preacher under the name of John Downes.² Doubtless masses of the common people, and perhaps some of the higher classes, believed these idle tales. At any rate, these were turbulent times for the Methodists. "Knock their brains out"; "Press them for soldiers," were the common cries.

Another reason for the earnest desire on the part of some to rid the country of these men was greed. John Nelson declares that "several ale-house keepers cursed me to my face, and told me that I ought to be transported, for I preached so much hell and damnation that I terrified the people so that they durst not spend sixpence with a neighbor" for intoxicants,³ and Southey says that the ale-house keepers proposed that "John should be pressed for a soldier, for as fast as he made converts, they lost customers."⁴

Southey hints at a third reason, which seems to have been a factor in all the persecutions. He says, "The vicar of Birstal, which [place] was John Nelson's home and headquarters, thought it justifiable to rid the parish by any means of a man, who preached with more zeal and more effect than himself."⁵ Whatever the cause or causes, beginning in 1744, press gangs were

¹John Ashton, *Social Life in Reign of Queen Anne*, p. 401.

This forcing men into military service was called "pressing."

²John Wesley, *Journal*, April 16, 1744.

³Charles Wesley, *Journal*, July 18, 1746; also John Nelson, *Journal*, p. 94.

⁴Robt. Southey, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 37; also John Nelson, *Journal*, pp. 104 and 109.

⁵Robt. Southey, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 37; also John Nelson, *Journal*, p. 104.

on the track of the Methodist preachers and of the Methodist people. Their opponents believed that, if they could rid the country by any means of the preachers, Methodism would perish. Hence the vigor with which they sought the leaders.

The first dated notice of these press-warrants against the Methodists is from Charles Wesley, who says that in March magistrates threatened "to take Daniel Sant, an industrious founder with four children, whose only crime is that he suffers the poor people to pray in his house."⁶

In April the Rev. Mr. Graves was pressed at Saint Just, and sent on board a man-of-war, and several of the people, "who were quiet, industrious men," were pressed by the same warrant "and taken away from their work, and wives and families."⁷ In July a poor baker's boy "was taken by his uncle, dragged away to prison. They kept him a week, and then brought him before the commissioners, who could find no cause to punish or detain him," so he was released.⁸

James Everett says that "the societies for a considerable distance round Sheffield were thrown into the greatest alarm in the month of May." Mr. John Downes was pressed, and for the better security of his person was thrown into Lincoln gaol.⁹ Mr. Downes was taken at Epworth. He was the man whom the people of Cornwall suspected to be the Pretender. On May 14 Wesley preached at Epworth, and the constable who took Mr. Downes was in his congregation.¹⁰ Mr. Downes was released either the latter part of May or early in June.¹¹

The case of John Nelson is most widely known, for he wrote quite a full account of his experience, and published it some twenty years or more later in his *Journal*. Robert Southey, poet laureate of England, as he studied the circumstances of the

⁶Charles Wesley, *Journal*, March 19, 1744.

⁷John Wesley, *Works*, Account of Samuel Hitchens, par. 2; also *History of Methodist People*, par. 28.

⁸Charles Wesley, *Journal*, July 13, 1744.

⁹James Everett, *History of Methodism in Sheffield*, p. 48.

¹⁰John Wesley, *Journal*, May 14, 1744.

¹¹Charles Wesley, *Journal*, June 6, 1744.

impressment, and the spirit of the man, declared that "John Nelson had as high a spirit and as brave a heart as ever Englishman was blessed with."¹² Surely in every respect Mr. Nelson showed himself as noble as his persecutors were base, and he was more than a match for them all in courage and controversy.

Mr. Nelson had been away on a preaching trip, and upon his return home was told that they were going to press men for the King's service, and that "several of the ale-house keepers and clergy had agreed to press" him for one.¹³ A little later as he was at work a man went to him and said that "he had called at a public house for a pint of ale, a little way from Birstal, and he heard the landlord offer to lay five pounds with some that were drinking that John Nelson would be sent for a soldier before ten days were passed." The man said to him, "I would have you take care, for evil is determined against you." Mr. Nelson replied, "I am not my own, but the Lord's; he that lays hands on me will burn his own fingers, and God will deliver me after he hath tried me."¹⁴ Wherever he went to preach for ten days together he was told that the constables had orders to press him. He himself now felt that trouble was brewing. At night as he was going to a neighboring town to preach, he was met by one who told him that the parson and ale-house keepers had agreed to press him that night and to send him away the next morning; for the commissioners were to sit at Halifax, and they would dispatch him before he could get anyone to appear in his behalf. She said, "I would have you turn back, for there is one ale-house keeper that swears he will press you, if his arm rots from his shoulder." Mr. Nelson replied, "I cannot fear, for God is on my side, and his word has added strength to my soul this day; and if I fall into the hands of wicked men, God shall be glorified thereby, and when he hath proved me in the furnace, he will bring me forth as gold." Therefore he went on and preached to

¹²Robt. Southey, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 38.

¹³John Nelson, *Journal*, pp. 104ff. The rest of the narrative is taken from this source except where otherwise indicated.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 107.

a well-behaved congregation according to his appointment.¹⁵ When he had concluded his discourse, Joseph Gibson, a constable's deputy, and an ale-house keeper, who found his craft in danger, pressed him for a soldier. This was on May 4, 1744. Mr. Nelson asked by whose order. "He said, several of the inhabitants of the town, who did not like so much preaching"; and, says Nelson, "by his own talk it appeared they were those of his own craft, and the clergyman, who had agreed together."¹⁶

Mr. Nelson says, "He caused me to go to the White Hart, whither Mr. Charlesworth and Mr. Holmes, of Sikehouse, and several more went with us, and Mr. Charlesworth offered five hundred pounds bail for me till the next day, but no bail was to be taken for a Methodist, so called." Consequently, Mr. Nelson was taken to the constable's house, where he was kept ten hours before the warrant arrived. Here he and his friends sang a hymn, prayed together, and parted.

The next morning he went to Birstal to his own home and changed his clothes, then was taken to Halifax. He was taken before the commissioners, and as soon as they saw him they smiled at one another. They ordered the doorkeeper not to let anyone in, but a friend, Mr. Thomas Brooks, got in, and they said, "That is one of his converts." They called Joseph Gibson and asked, "How many men have you brought?" He said, "One." "Well, and what have you against him?" "Why, gentlemen," said he, "I have nothing to say against him, but he preaches to the people, and some of our townsmen do not like so much preaching.'" At this the commissioners laughed, and one of them said that Mr. Nelson was fit to go for a soldier, where he might have preaching enough. Mr. Nelson said, "Sir, you ought not to swear." He replied, "Well, you have no license to preach, and you shall go for a soldier." Mr. Nelson answered, "Sir, I have surely as much right to preach as you have to swear."

¹⁵John Nelson, *Journal*, pp. 108ff.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 109ff.; John Wesley, *Journal*, May 15, 1744; Charles Wesley, *Journal*, May 14, 1744.

The commissioner said to an officer present, "Captain, is he fit for you?" "Yes," said the captain. "Then take him away."¹⁷

Mr. Nelson protested that there were present several of his neighbors; that the commissioners ought to give him the liberty of another man, and to hear from these neighbors whether he was such a man as the warrant mentioned. They replied, "Here is your minister, one of the commissioners, and he has told us your character, and we will hear no more."

Then Mr. Brooks laid a petition before them, sent to Mr. Nelson by "several neighboring gentlemen, which testified that I had done no evil, but had behaved myself well in my neighborhood, and had always maintained my family very well, and they desired them to set me at liberty." Mr. Brooks said, "Gentlemen, you see he is not such a man as is mentioned in the warrant." They commanded Mr. Brooks to hold his peace, and the minister falsely accused him of living with a woman of "the worst character in our town."¹⁸

Upon this Mr. Nelson said, "Gentlemen, I see there is neither law nor justice for a man that is called a Methodist; but all is lawful that is done against me. I pray God forgive you, for you know not what you do." They replied, "Surely your minister must be a better judge of you than any other man, and he has told us enough of you and your preaching." Mr. Nelson asked: "Mr. C——, what do you know of me that is evil! Whom have I defrauded! Or where have I contracted a debt that I cannot pay?" He said, "You have no visible way of getting your living." "I answered, 'I am as able to get my living with my hands as any man of my trade in England is, and you know it; and had I not been at work yesterday, and all the week before.'" To this the commissioners did not reply, but ordered the captain to take him away.

Afterward several others were taken before the commissioners. Three were condemned to go with Mr. Nelson, and four

¹⁷John Nelson, *Journal*, pp. 110ff.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 111.

or five were acquitted. These, however, all had their neighbors to speak for them.

The prisoners were then guarded to Halifax, where the keeper would not allow them to be put into his jail, so they were sent to the officer's headquarters. Here friends went to Mr. Nelson and sympathized with him as brothers.¹⁹

At six that evening they left Halifax, and when they reached Bradford the captain "went and fetched the keeper of the dungeon; and said, 'Take this man, and put him into the dungeon; and take this other along with you.' (A poor harmless man, all the clothes upon whose back were not worth one shilling: neither did they lay any thing to his charge, when he was ordered for a soldier.)"

When they reached the door of the dungeon a soldier "went to the captain and said, 'Sir, if you will give me charge over Mr. Nelson, my life for his, he shall be forthcoming in the morning.' But the captain threatened to break his head, if he spoke about me any more."²⁰

The captain passed by them before they went down into the dungeon, and Mr. Nelson asked: "Sir, what have I done that I must go to the dungeon? If you are afraid of me that I should run away, set a guard over me in a room, and I will pay them." The captain replied, "My order is to put you in the dungeon." This dungeon, says Nelson, "stunk worse than a hog-sty, or little house, by reason of the blood and filth which sink from the butchers who kill over it."

That night a citizen of Bradford went to the dungeon, and though he was an enemy of the Methodists, "when he smelt the ill savor of the place, he said, 'Humanity moves me.' He went away directly and about eleven came again, and said, 'I will assure you I am not in your way of thinking, but for all that, I have been with your captain, and offered ten pounds bail for you, and myself as a prisoner, if he would let you lie in a bed but

¹⁹John Nelson, *Journal*, p. 114.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 115ff.

all in vain, for I can get nothing of him but bad words. If a justice were in town, I would have gone to him, and would soon have fetched you out, but since it is as it is, I pray God plead your cause.'”

All that day Mr. Nelson had had neither food nor drink, except a little tea in the morning. Before going into the dungeon he desired a little water, but this the captain refused him. In the evening, about ten o'clock, several of the people went to the dungeon with candles and food and water, which they gave to him through a hole in the door. They also took food for the poor man, who was his companion. Had it not been for their kindness, he would have suffered hunger, for as soon as the two men were locked up, the officers went their way, and took no more thought of them, leaving them without so much as a stone upon which to sit. When Mr. Nelson had refreshed himself with food and water, he gave thanks to God, and he and his company spent “almost all night” singing hymns; they without and he within.

At four o'clock in the morning his wife, who had journeyed from Birstal, and several others reached the dungeon. They talked with him through the hole in the door. His wife, who had two children at home, and soon expected a third, said to him, “Fear not; the cause is God's for which you are here, and he will plead it himself. Therefore, be not concerned about me and the children, for he that feeds the young ravens will be mindful of us.”²¹

At five o'clock he was taken out, and the prisoners were guarded as they marched to Leeds, which they reached about ten o'clock. Just as church began, the others were ordered to the ale-house,²² but Mr. Nelson was guarded to jail. Hundreds of people stood in the street to look at him through the iron grate, and, he says, were ready to fight about him. Several offered bail, and Mr. Nelson was told that one hundred pounds, which

²¹John Nelson, *Journal*, p. 117.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 118ff.

was offered by a stranger, was refused. Here the jailer was civil. At night about one hundred of his friends visited him in the jail. They sung a hymn and prayed. Mr. Nelson gave an exhortation, and they parted. A friend, not willing that he should lie on stinking straw, sent a bed to the jail for him.

At five o'clock the next morning he was let out again, and shortly afterward they started on their march toward York. Many of his friends went with him for about three miles. When they left him they were deeply affected, but the captive exhorted them to "stand fast; in nothing to be terrified by your adversaries."²³

They reached York about three o'clock in the afternoon. Mr. Nelson was taken before several officers, "who seemed to rejoice as men that had taken great spoil, and saluted" him "with many a grievous oath." Mr. Nelson rebuked them for their unseemly talk, but they answered, "You must not preach here, for you are delivered to us for a soldier, and must not talk to us that are officers." Mr. Nelson replied, "There is but one way for you to prevent me." "They said, 'What is that?'" Mr. Nelson answered, "To swear no more in my hearing."²⁴

Then the pressed soldiers were guarded through the city. Mr. Nelson, of course, was recognized. He says, "The streets and windows were filled with people, who shouted and huzzaed as if I had been one that had laid waste the nation."²⁵

At the guardhouse the captains cast lots to decide who should have him. They then offered him money, which he refused. Thereupon he was guarded to prison by a file of musketeers, where he was kept for two nights, and part of three days, surrounded by exceedingly coarse and blasphemous men. So, he says, "I had work enough both day and night to reprove them."

²³John Nelson, *Journal*, p. 120.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 121.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 122.

Several of the townspeople visited him, and inquired about the doctrines of the Methodists. These he explained to them, whereupon they wished him well and out of the enemy's hands. They then left him, he says, to his "company of drunkards and swearers."

He says, "I may indeed say I have fought with beasts at York, for so these men live: yet my speaking to them was not in vain, for they bridled their tongues in my presence after the first twenty-four hours."²⁶

In this prison strangers brought him food. And here he received another visit from his faithful wife and her friend. After an affecting interview they wished him a good repose on his bed of boards and left him for the night. The next morning they visited him again, took him some food, and encouraged him to "be strong in the Lord, and not fear them that can kill the body only." He says, "My heart was rejoiced to see them so steadfast in the faith."

After this second interview, he was taken to a court-martial, guarded by a file of musketeers with bayonets fixed. The officers asked, "What is this man's crime?" The answer was, "This is that Methodist preacher, and he refuses to take money." The officers then said to him, "Sir, you need not find fault with us, for we must obey our orders, which are to make you act as a soldier; for you are delivered to us, and, if you have not justice done you, we cannot help it." They offered him some more money, which he again refused. But instead of punishing him, they allowed him to go to his quarters. He spent most of this afternoon in company with his wife and friends till evening when he went to parade.²⁷

On the following Sunday, by the request of several, Mr. Nelson preached on the moor to about three hundred persons. He went again in the evening, and found a great company, which, he believed, consisted of six thousand people. But a great part of

²⁶John Nelson, *Journal*, pp. 123ff.

²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

the soldiers were there almost drunk, who began to quarrel with the people, so, fearing a disturbance, he withdrew.²⁸

The next morning Mr. Nelson heard that some clergymen were with the officers. At night an officer sent for him and said: "What, you cannot leave off preaching yet; but we must be blamed about you? But if ever you preach publicly any more, you shall be severely whipped." Mr. Nelson made no promise, so was dismissed with many threats.²⁹ He had promised to go to Acham, a village about a mile out of York. So the next evening he went and preached in a field to almost the whole town.³⁰

Shortly after this he met his brother and a friend. However, he had but a short time with them, for he was soon called to answer for his preaching. The ensign, having heard that he had preached, sent for him, and said, "'D—m your blood, sir, have you been preaching this morning?'" "I told him I had, on which he swore he would have no preaching nor praying in the regiment. Then said I, 'Sir, you should have no swearing nor cursing either; for surely I have as much right to pray and preach as you have to curse and swear.'" ³¹

For this offense he was confined again, entering the prison just as the church service began, and remained for two nights and nearly three days.³² On Tuesday he was taken before the major, who told him that preaching was no crime, and that when he had done his duty he could preach every night in a house or any private place out of the town, but he should make no mobs. Mr. Nelson again was allowed to go to his quarters.³³

On Thursday morning they left York,³⁴ marching through

²⁸John Nelson, Journal, p. 35.

²⁹Ibid., p. 136.

³⁰Ibid., p. 137.

³¹Ibid., p. 138.

³²Ibid., p. 139.

³³Ibid., p. 140.

³⁴NOTE—The report having been circulated that the army was about to leave York, many of the people came and said, "We are sorry you are going so soon from York. But, if you get your liberty, we hope both you and Mr.

Easingwold, and rested on Sunday at Darlington. Here he was hectorred and tormented in the street by a petty officer,³⁵ the one that had put him in prison at York for preaching. He said to Mr. Nelson, "I will make you mind your firelock and leave off your preaching."³⁶

On the Monday following the army marched to Durham. About noon Mr. Nelson went to the Market place, where he met his friend Westell, who was inquiring for him among the soldiers.³⁷ Mr. Westell informed Mr. Nelson that Wesley would reach Durham about four o'clock in the afternoon. This was a

Wesley will come, for we have need of such plain dealing, and thousands in this city would be glad to hear. You see what a populous, wicked place it is. Pray, do not forget us, but think of us, when you see us not. We expected some of you two or three years ago, but you had no regard for our souls till God brought you by force. Surely, you were not sold hither, but sent for good. Therefore, forget us not." (John Nelson, Journal, p. 141.)

³⁵NOTE—This seems to have been the hardest temptation in all this bitter experience. Mr. Nelson relates it as follows: "In the evening one of the officers came to me and said, 'Well, sir, why was you not at church to-day?' I answered, 'I was, sir, and if you had been there, you might have seen me, for I never miss going, when I have an opportunity.' 'Well, sir,' he added, 'have you preached since you came hither?' 'Not publicly, yet,' I replied. He swore he wished I would that he might punish me severely. 'But, sir,' I told him, 'if you do not repent and leave off that habit of swearing, you will be worse punished than you are able to punish me.' He said, 'I will make you mind your firelock, and leave off your preaching.' 'Yes, sir,' I answered, 'when I leave off speaking.' This was he who put me in prison at York for preaching. . . . (Ibid., pp. 144ff.)

"He called for one of his soldiers and took the cockade out of his hat, putting it in mine, and swore he would make me wear it. This caused a sore temptation to rise in me to think that an ignorant, wicked man should thus torment me in the street and prison, and I was able to tie his head and heels together. I found an old man's bone in me, but the Lord lifted up a standard when anger was coming in like a flood, else I should have wrung his neck to the ground, and set my foot upon him, which would have brought a reproach upon the gospel, and wounded my soul. But, oh, God is good to me, for he showed me my danger, and delivered me from it in a moment. Then I could look on him with pity, and pray for him from the ground of my heart." (Ibid., p. 145.)

³⁶John Nelson, Journal, p. 144.

³⁷Ibid., p. 146.

great comfort to him. Accordingly, the two friends went to a common about a mile from town, where they first met their chief.³⁸ Afterward Mr. Nelson and Thomas Beard, a fellow prisoner and preacher, met Wesley again, and went to the inn and stayed till nine o'clock.³⁹

The next move of the army was to Sunderland. On the next Saturday night Mr. Nelson was ordered to stand sentry on the Sunday following. But, he says, "I desired I might stand another day, or pay for my guard. I believe ten men offered to stand for me, but all in vain; for the ensign, who had showed hatred for me all along, was the officer of the guard that day; and he protested he would make me do it myself. I asked, 'Sir, what have I done that I cannot have the same liberty of another man?' He answered, 'You love the church too well, and I will keep you from it, and make them go who do not like to go.'" After this interview Mr. Nelson went to the guardhouse, where many went to talk with him; but he says, "I did not stand sentry till six on Monday morning."⁴⁰

Mr. Nelson's sufferings were now rapidly drawing to a close. He appears to have won the esteem and the sympathy at least of many of the soldiers. On the march about twenty offered to carry his gun for him or anything else that he had.⁴¹ About ten offered to stand sentry in his place, and when he went to the guardhouse many of them went to talk with him.⁴² A few days later, when he preached, several of them went to hear him and gave good attention. Moreover, many of the people of the towns where his regiment was quartered were convinced of the injustice that he suffered. And many were convinced that the Methodists were misrepresented.⁴³ The papers evidently were discussing the matter, and, as the army reached Sunderland, a

³⁸John Nelson, *Journal*, p. 147.

³⁹*Ibid.*; also John Wesley, *Journal*, July 11, 1744.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 151.

landlord approached Mr. Nelson, requesting him to choose a companion and ask to be billeted at his home.⁴⁴

The week after the effort to make him stand sentry on Sunday, he spent an hour in the chamber with an officer, who expressed sympathy for him, assured him that he should not be kept from church again so long as he was with the army, spoke of the injustice of his impressment, spoke appreciatively of him as a man, and of the Methodist doctrine, and secured for him a furlough for a week. During this furlough, he received a letter from Charles Wesley, which stated that "the Earl of S. had assured the L. H. that I should be set at liberty in a few days."⁴⁵ Through the Countess of Huntingdon efforts were made with those high in government positions for the release of the preachers. Of Mr. Nelson, the author of the *Life of Countess of Huntingdon* says: "Lady Huntingdon exerted all her influence to obtain his discharge. By means of her acquaintance with Judith, Dowager Countess of Sunderland, she obtained an interview with her stepson, Charles, fourth Earl of Sunderland, afterward Duke of Marlborough, who had a short time before been promoted to the rank of brigadier-general of his Majesty's forces. On a faithful representation of the case, his Lordship assured Lady Huntingdon that those for whom she had interested herself should be set at liberty in a few days."⁴⁶ Through these influences, and probably redeemed by a substitute, Mr. Nelson was released on Saturday, July 28.⁴⁷ That night he preached and several soldiers were present. When he took leave of them some of them were deeply affected. They said, "We are glad you are set at liberty, but sorry to part with you."⁴⁸ And the major, upon giving him the discharge said, "I wish you well wherever you go, for I believe you Methodists are a well-meaning

⁴⁴John Nelson, *Journal*, p. 148.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁴⁶*Life and Times of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. ii, p. 258; see also John Nelson, *Journal*, p. 153.

⁴⁷Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. i, p. 385.

⁴⁸John Nelson, *Journal*, p. 158.

people.”⁴⁹ For many years after this Mr. Nelson was one of Wesley’s most effective preachers.

Thomas Beard was pressed about the same time as Mr. Nelson, and was his companion in arms. Even the powerful frame of John Nelson nearly broke under the strain of outraged justice. For three weeks he was ill, but recovered.⁵⁰ But Thomas Beard did not fare so well. The following brief account is quoted from Wesley’s Journal:

“I left Newcastle, and in the afternoon met John Nelson at Durham, with Thomas Beard, another quiet and peaceable man, who had lately been torn from his trade and wife and children and sent away as a soldier, that is, banished from all that was near and dear to him, and constrained to dwell among lions for no other crime either committed or pretended than that of calling sinners to repentance. But his soul was in nothing terrified by his adversaries. Yet the body, after a while, sunk under its burden. He was then lodged in the hospital at Newcastle, where he still praised God continually. His fever increased: he was let blood. His arm festered, mortified, and was cut off. Two or three days after God signed his discharge, and called him to his eternal home.

“Servant of God, well done! Well hast thou fought
The better fight, who single hast maintained,
Against revolted multitudes, the cause
Of God, in word mightier than they in arms.”⁵¹

Efforts to take Methodists for soldiers were renewed with increased vigor the next year. Several attempts were made to secure Richard Moss, but without success. At Epworth, on June 5, as he was preaching the constable and churchwardens entered and ordered him to stop, saying that they had a warrant to take him for a soldier. However, his friends in the congregation formed a sort of bodyguard, and kept the opposers from ap-

⁴⁹John Nelson, Journal, p. 157.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 157.

⁵¹John Wesley, Journal, July 11, 1744.

proaching the pulpit. The contest lasted for about half an hour, till one of the chief gentlemen of the town called to Mr. Moss, took him to his own house, and sent him out of the town.⁵²

He was back again at the appointed time one week later. This time the officers succeeded in getting hold of him, and dragged him down the stairs. His friends began to pray. One of the mob hearing this, said, "I will have nothing to do in this matter." This influenced the others, who released him, and allowed him to go his way undisturbed. The next week he was back again, but this time the people sent him away, lest he should be taken.⁵³

Tyerman states the following: "The Westminster Journal for June 8th, 1745, narrates that a noted Methodist preacher named Tolly had been pressed for a soldier in Staffordshire, and had appeared before the magistrates, attended by many of his 'deluded followers of both sexes, who pretended he was a learned and holy man; and yet it appeared that he was only a journeyman joiner, and had done great mischief among the colliers.' The poor, luckless joiner was, therefore, coupled to a sturdy tinker, and sent off to Staffordshire jail. He had already been pressed once before, and the Methodists had subscribed forty pounds to obtain his freedom, and were intending to repeat the kindness. But the impeccable editor of the Westminster Journal hopes that the magistrates will be proof against golden bribes, for 'such wretches' as Tolly 'are incendiaries in a nation,' and greatly to be dreaded."⁵⁴

At Redruth, Cornwall, Wesley was informed that Thomas Maxfield had been pressed. He immediately started to intercede for his friend. He found him at the home of one Henry Tompkins, "nothing terrified by his adversaries." He asked to see the warrant. "It was directed by Dr. Borlase and his father, and Mr. Eustick to the constables and overseers of several

⁵²Methodist Magazine, 1798, p. 58; also John Wesley, Journal, August 12, 1745.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Tyerman, Life and Times of John Wesley, vol. i, p. 473.

parishes, requiring them to 'apprehend all such able-bodied men as had no lawful calling or sufficient maintenance, and to bring them before the aforesaid gentlemen at Marazion on Friday, 21, to be examined whether they were proper persons to serve his Majesty in the land service.'" This warrant contained "the names of seven or eight persons, most of whom were well known to have lawful callings, and a sufficient maintenance thereby. But that was all one; they were called Methodists, wherefore soldiers they must be. Underneath was added, 'A person, his name unknown, who disturbs the peace of the parish.'" ⁵⁵

On the day set for the trial Wesley appeared at court. He says: "About two Mr. Thompson and I went into the room where the justices and commissioners were. After a few minutes Dr. Borlase stood up and asked 'whether we had any business?' I told him, 'We have. We desire to be heard concerning one who was lately apprehended at Crowan.' He said: 'Gentlemen, the business of Crowan does not come up yet. You shall be sent for when it does.' So we retired and waited in another room till after nine o'clock. They delayed the affair of Mr. Maxfield, as we imagined they would to the very last. About nine he was called. I would have gone in then, but Mr. Thompson advised to wait a little longer. The next information we received was that they had sentenced him to go for a soldier. Hearing this, we went straight to the commission-chamber, but the honorable gentlemen were gone.'" ⁵⁶

Mr. Maxfield was offered to the captain of a man-of-war, but he refused to take him, saying that he had no authority to receive such as he. ⁵⁷ He was then taken immediately to Penzance, where, as Wesley heard the next day, he was "put down into the dungeon." The mayor was inclined to let him go, but Dr. Borlase in order to prevent this, had gone hither himself, and delivered him to "one who was to act as an officer." ⁵⁸

⁵⁵John Wesley, Journal, June 19, 1745.

⁵⁶Ibid., June 21, 1745.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., June 22, 1745.

On June 10, 1745, a Mr. Beaumont preached at Waltown. At the close of his sermon he was pressed for a soldier, and taken to the home of the justice and left there. As the justice was not at home, the preacher scarcely knew what to do. Finally, however, he ascended the steps of the house and defended his right to preach under the government, and then went his way. Soon after he was apprehended again by another constable, and taken before the commissioners. Here he proved himself to have a small income from a freehold, and consequently was released.⁵⁹

On June 25, after Wesley had finished his sermon at Saint Just, the constable apprehended Edward Greenfield by a warrant from Dr. Borlase. Mr. Greenfield was a tinner, forty-six years of age, with a wife and seven children. Three years previously "he was eminent for cursing, swearing, drunkenness, and all manner of wickedness." Wesley asked, "What objection there was to Edward Greenfield," and received the answer: "Why, the man is well enough in other things, but his impudence the gentlemen cannot bear. Why, sir, he says he knows his sins are forgiven."⁶⁰

An attempt was now made to press Wesley himself. On the evening of July 2, Wesley preached at Saint Just. He noticed several gentlemen who probably had never been present before, and a large number of tanners, who stood at a distance from the rest, and a great multitude of men, women, and children, who seemed not to know why they were there.⁶¹

Just as he concluded his sermon Mr. Eustick, a neighboring gentleman, made his way through the congregation to Wesley's presence and said, "Sir, I have a warrant from Dr. Borlase, and you must go with me." Then, turning around, he said, "Sir, are you Mr. Shepherd? If so you are mentioned in the warrant too. Be pleased, sir, to come with me." He took them to a public house. Here Wesley expressed his readiness to go before Dr.

⁵⁹Christian History, vol. vii, part iii, pp. 14ff.

⁶⁰John Wesley, Journal, June 25, 1745.

⁶¹Ibid., July 2, 1745.

Borlase at once, but after some delay Mr. Eustick left him at the inn promising to take him before the Doctor in the morning. The next morning, accordingly, Wesley and Mr. Shepherd waited till nine o'clock, but no Mr. Eustick appeared. Mr. Shepherd then went to inquire for him at the house where he lodged. "He met him coming, as he thought, to our inn." But after waiting for some time, they inquired again, and learned he had turned aside to another house in the town. "I went thither and asked, 'Is Mr. Eustick here?' After some pause one said, 'Yes,' and showed me into the parlor. When he came down he said, 'O, sir, will you be so good as to go with me to the Doctor's?' I answered, 'Sir, I came for that purpose.' 'Are you ready, sir?' I answered, 'Yes.' 'Sir, I am not quite ready. In a little time, sir, in a quarter of an hour I will wait upon you. I will come to William Chenhall's.' In about three quarters of an hour he came, and finding there was no remedy, he called for his horse, and put forward for Dr. Borlase's house. But he was in no haste; so that we were an hour and a quarter in riding three or four measured miles. As soon as we came into the yard, he asked a servant, 'Is the Doctor at home?' Upon whose answering, 'No, sir, he is gone to church,' he presently said, 'Well, sir, I have executed my commission. I have no more to say.'" ⁶²

In the afternoon Wesley and Mr. Shepherd reached Gwenap. Here, "finding the house would not contain one fourth of the people," Wesley stood before the door and was reading his text when two men rode into the congregation. One seized several of the people; the other cried out saying: "'Seize him, seize him. I say seize the preacher for his Majesty's service.' But no one stirring, he rode up and struck several of his attendants, cursing them bitterly for not doing as they were bid. Perceiving still that they would not move, he leaped off his horse, swore he would do it himself, and caught hold of my cassock, crying, 'I take you to serve his Majesty.' A servant taking his horse, he took

⁶²John Wesley, Journal, July 2, 1745.

me by the arm, and we walked arm in arm for about three quarters of a mile. He entertained me all the time with the wickedness of the fellows belonging to the society. When he was taking breath, I said, 'Sir, be they what they will, I apprehend it will not justify you in seizing me in this manner, and violently carrying me away as you said to serve his Majesty.' He replied: 'I seize you and violently carry you away! No, sir, no. Nothing like it. I asked you to go with me to my house. And you said you were willing. And, if so, you are welcome. And, if not, you are welcome to go where you please.' I answered, 'Sir, I know not if it would be safe for me to go back through this rabble.' 'Sir,' said he, 'I will go with you myself.' He then called for his horse, and another for me and rode back with me to the place from whence he took me."⁶³

This was Mr. B——, probably Dr. Borlase.⁶⁴ Whoever it may have been, he evidently was greatly disturbed. His embarrassment may have been due to the weakness of his cause, and also to the remarkable presence of mind and self-command of Wesley. This would naturally react upon a person under excitement. Regardless of the popular feeling against him, the fact that Wesley was an ordained clergyman, a scholar, and the leader of a great movement, which was known throughout the three kingdoms, would tend to create no inconsiderable amount of respect for him. In dealing with him the officers often seemed ill at ease. Perhaps they knew the injustice of their cause. At any rate, the calm, kindly and courteous presence of a man naturally would disturb another such as he describes his assailant to have been. There are other instances of men who were awed by his presence. By experience he had learned how to meet and how to contend with a whole mob. Therefore it would take one man of great resistance to withstand a strong personality trained in the school of bitter experience, as was Wesley.

Before Wesley had completed his sermon at Stithians on

⁶³John Wesley, *Journal*, July 2, 1745.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

July 14 the constables and churchwardens went to the place and pressed one of his hearers.⁶⁵

Howell Harris in a letter to Charles Wesley says that he and his associates were hunted "like partridges, but still the work prospers. Four of our brethren have been pressed, and are now in Brecon Gaol. One of them was apprehended last year. Of the other three, one was a private man, one a Welsh schoolmaster to Mr. Griffith Jones, and the other taught an English school," etc.⁶⁶

"At Woodley in Cheshire, John Bennet and three other Methodists were pressed."⁶⁷ In this instance most of the press gang were dissenters.

Peter Jaco tells us that at Grampound, in 1754, he was pressed, "and kept under a strong guard for several days without meat or drink, but what I was obliged to procure at a large expense." It also was threatened that he should have his feet tied under the horse's belly while he was carried eight miles before the commission. He was honorably acquitted, yet he says it cost him a rather large sum of money as well as much trouble.⁶⁸

In 1757 William Hitchens was pressed at Bradford and taken to an inn. A friend hearing of his apprehension went to the inn and offered bail for the appearance of Mr. Hitchens at court the next day. He was told that they would take his word for one thousand pounds, but not for the preacher's release, as he must go to the roundhouse. To this he was conveyed by five soldiers. He found nothing to sit upon but a stone, and nothing to lie upon but "a little straw." Soon after a friend took him a chair, upon which he sat all night, guarded by twelve soldiers.⁶⁹

In the afternoon he was taken before the commission. He showed them that he had a lawful business and also an estate. Upon this he was allowed to give bond to appear again in three

⁶⁵John Wesley, *Journal*, July 14, 1745.

⁶⁶John Bulmer, *Memoirs of Howell Harris*, p. 41.

⁶⁷Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 472.

⁶⁸Jackson's *Lives*, vol. i, p. 264.

⁶⁹John Wesley, *Journal*, February 22, 1757.

weeks. At the appointed time he appeared, taking with him the papers showing his title to his estate. His brother also made an oath concerning him to the commission. Whence they allowed him to be set at liberty.⁷⁰

In the year 1758, while a Mr. Thompson was preaching, "an unruly mob arose (instigated by the minister of the parish), and cruelly assaulted him and several of the principal Methodists, carrying them off in triumph, and taking the people, without any kind of a trial, on board a transport, which then lay ready to sail with a fleet of men-of-war. Mr. Thompson was confined in prison, expecting every hour to be sent on board the transport also, and he was not permitted to see any of his friends. The parson and the noble justice of the peace (who, I presume, resided in the same parish) sometimes deigned to visit him in order to dispute with him on religious subjects."⁷¹

This affair having reached the ears of the Countess of Huntingdon, she, with some others of influence, "made application to the government by which means Mr. Thompson and the people were soon set at liberty."⁷²

On the evening of July 4, 1759, Wesley was preaching near Stockton market place. He says, "I had hardly finished the hymn when I observed the people in great confusion, which was occasioned by a lieutenant of a man-of-war, who had chosen that time to bring his press gang and ordered them to take Joseph Jones and William Atwood."⁷³ Joseph Jones told the lieutenant that he belonged to Wesley, and was released. William Atwood showed that he was a licensed preacher, and was also released. The lieutenant "seized upon a young man of the town, but the women rescued him by main strength. They also broke the lieutenant's head, and so stoned both him and his men that they ran away with all speed."⁷⁴

⁷⁰John Wesley, *Journal*, February 22, 1757.

⁷¹Anon., *Experiences of Methodist Preachers*, p. 381.

⁷²*Ibid.*

⁷³John Wesley, *Journal*, July 4, 1759.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

This is interesting, as it is one of the very rare instances of meeting physical force with physical force. But it is to be observed that it was the women that resisted. It also indicates that the Methodists were gaining in popular favor. For in the earlier periods, as has been noticed, even the women were not exempted from the most brutal violence, even when they offered no resistance.

The last recorded instance of these impressments is that of George Cussons, September, 1761. This was a little more than seventeen years after the first efforts at this kind of persecution. Mr. Cussons and three others "were forcibly taken away by a press gang, and sent on board the tender, or receiving ship," where they were kept all night, and the greater part of the next day, and from whence they were to be sent to a man-of-war. A contrary wind sprang up which caused delay. This gave time for the friends to interfere, and on the afternoon of the second day they were set at liberty.⁷⁵

Mr. Cussons attributes this affair to "persons in a higher situation, who were showing their hatred to" them, "and who were endeavoring to banish" them "from the place. And they so far succeeded in their design that, during the winter" their "meeting⁷⁶ together for worship was in a great measure prevented."

At another time Mr. Cussons was stopped in the street by the press gang, and taken to the house of rendezvous, where he was kept for a short time. He says, he was "handled very roughly, and much coarse language was bestowed" ⁷⁷ upon him. This, however, was the extent of his suffering from them, for he was soon set at liberty, and the Methodists were henceforth free from persecution of this nature.

⁷⁵Memoirs of George Cussons, p. 20, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. clviii.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

CHAPTER X

THE CLERGY AND THE MAGISTRATES

DR. SAMUEL CHANDLER says: "The Christian Religion absolutely condemns persecution for conscience sake. Were the doctrines of the gospel regarded as they should be, and the precepts of the Christian religion submitted to by all who profess to believe it, universal benevolence would be the certain effect, and eternal peace and union would reign amongst the members of the Christian Church. For, if there are any commandments of certain clearness, any precepts of evident obligation in the gospel, they are such as refer to the exercise of love, and the maintaining universal charity."¹ In support of this statement he quotes the Sermon on the Mount; the new commandment of love, etc. He also makes the following declaration, lamentable because apparently undeniable: "It is a truth too evident to be denied that the clergy in general throughout almost all the several ages of the Christian Church have been deep and warm in the measure of persecution, as though it had been a doctrine expressly inculcated in the sacred writings, and recommended by the practice of our Saviour and his apostles."² This was published in 1813 and is quite applicable to the attitude of the clergy of England toward the Methodists, during most of the eighteenth century. Also in certain localities they were ably assisted by the magistrates and justices of the peace. Of course they were not all opposed; there were a few noble exceptions, but in the main, the clergy "were exceedingly bitter."³ Their sermons often abounded with cruel invectives and false and injurious calumnies. Some represented the Methodists as the most wicked, abominable, aban-

¹Samuel Chandler, *The History of Persecution*, p. 390.

²*Ibid.*, p. 360.

³John Morris, *Autobiography*, *Methodist Magazine*, 1795, p. 72.

doned wretches in the world.⁴ The pulpits rang with "popery, madness, enthusiasm,"⁵ etc. Of course these addresses from the pulpits, and similar writings which followed, prejudiced the minds of many thousands against the Methodists, and caused them to suffer bitter persecution in various forms, and for many years. Sometimes the minister was enraged with the people because of their familiarity with the Scriptures;⁶ others because of the unusual zeal of the preacher,⁷ and some because the sermons applied with uncomfortable directness to the habits of the minister himself.⁸

Another and perhaps chief cause of this opposition was the extraordinary success of the Methodists. Though there were some notable admirers and adherents among the upper classes, and though a number of the nobility heard Wesley, and especially Whitefield, and a few joined the societies, yet it is quite true, as a rule, that the gentry and nobility either held aloof, or strongly opposed the movement. The masses, however, waited expectantly for a Methodist preacher to visit their community, and when he came, flocked to hear him. We read of congregations varying from one to many thousands listening to these preachers.⁹ Moreover, the poor people readily joined the societies. There are frequent references to opposition and to persecution following hard upon the heels of this great success.

Generally, the lesser clergy were not seeking to defend the principles of Christianity, and seldom, almost never, undertook the defense of the Bible or Bible doctrines. They opposed, and often most vehemently and with violence, what seemed to them to be an attack upon an institution, namely the church,¹⁰ which they served, and which they thought must be protected. To

⁴John Wesley, *Journal*, June 16, 1755; Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol. i, pp. 239ff., etc.

⁵Charles Wesley, *Journal*, July 17, 1744.

⁶*Ibid.*, July 30, 1744.

⁷Southey, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 37.

⁸John Wesley, *Works*, Letter to J. Smith, June 25, 1746.

⁹*Life of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. ii, p. 276.

¹⁰John Nelson, *Journal*, p. 92.

read in succession one account after another of their opposition one is made to feel that they were defending the church much as a politician might defend his party, the emphasis being placed, not so much upon the principles which the party represents as upon the party as an organization in itself. The doctrines, the principles of the gospel, seemed subordinated. Indeed, the Bible was sometimes openly attacked. But "the church," the institution, was paramount. It must be protected at any cost.

Methodism was intended by its originators to be a movement for the revival and reform of the Church of England, from within. Therefore, being clergymen of the Established Church, its leaders naturally sought the pulpits of the church from which to convey their messages. However, their emphasis of certain doctrines and their earnestness, their entire work in fact, soon met with disapproval, and they received the name of "enthusiasts." They were then excluded from pulpit after pulpit till practically all the churches of the three kingdoms were closed against them.¹¹

In 1739 Whitefield had a conversation of two hours with an opposing clergyman, whose chief objection was against the private societies, and using extempore prayer.¹² A little later he preached at Malmesbury, where he learned that much opposition had been made against his coming. The minister in particular had written to the churchwarden to stop him,¹³ but in vain. At Bristol, the dean being absent, the chancellor threatened to suspend him. He then preached at Newgate, taking a collection for the prisoners, but this also was forbidden by order of the mayor.¹⁴

Charles Wesley met a minister, who "complained heavily of the multitude of our communicants, and produced the canon against strangers. He could not admit it as a reason for their

¹¹John Hampson, *Memoirs of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 13; Original letters of John Wesley, p. 110; George Whitefield, *Journal*, p. 187.

¹²George Whitefield, *Journal*, p. 120.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹⁴*Memoirs of George Whitefield*, printed for W. Ross, p. 23.

coming to his church that they had no sacrament of their own." Wesley offered his assistance to lessen his trouble, but he declined it. "There were a hundred new communicants," he told them, "last Sunday, and I am credibly informed that some of them came out of spite to me."¹⁵

John Wesley, before going into the street and highways, as was his custom, sent to borrow the church. "The minister, one of the better disposed, sent back a civil message; would be glad to drink a glass of wine with me, but durst not lend me his pulpit for fifty guineas." He adds, "Mr. Whitefield durst lend me his field, which did just as well."¹⁶ They were forced, therefore, to go into the fields and streets; to build preaching-houses and tabernacles of their own, or to forsake their calling.

Among the dissenters there was some opposition, but by no means as bitter as that from the ministry of the Established Church. Quite frequently, however, they were sympathetic. It was only occasionally that they were among the persecutors. At one time Charles Wesley heard from a dissenting layman of the extreme bitterness of his two ministers, who made it their business to go from house to house to set their people against the Methodists and to threaten all who heard them with excommunication.¹⁷ At another time the rector and the Baptist minister did all they could to prevent the people from hearing the preachers.¹⁸ Once two dissenting laymen assisted the curate in setting on the mob, encouraging them and supplying them with as much ale as they could drink while they played a fire engine into the house, broke the windows, flooded the rooms, and spoiled the goods.¹⁹

At this time in England the Catholics were pretty well crushed, and their influence was not felt to any great extent. However, in Ireland they were powerful, and on more than one

¹⁵Charles Wesley, *Journal*, October 13, 1739.

¹⁶John Wesley, *Journal*, August 25, 1739.

¹⁷Charles Wesley, *Journal*, September 17, 1748.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, March 16, 1768.

¹⁹Southey, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, pp. 47ff.

occasion their opposition caused intense suffering.²⁰ Charles Wesley says that "all the Catholic priests take wretched pains to hinder their people from hearing us."²¹ Moreover, none were fiercer than the Irish mobs, many of whom were Catholics.²²

Closing the churches having failed to check the Methodists, the ministers preached against them, sometimes mentioning them by name. One minister represented them as those "whom Saint Paul foretold, who have the form, the outside show of holiness, but not the power, for they are ravening wolves, full of hypocrisy within."²³ Others represent them as "both heretics and schismatics; . . . as introducing popery, raising sedition, practicing both against church and state; and all manner of evil was publicly said both of us and [of] those who were accustomed to meet with us."²⁴ The vicar at Sarum sent his footman to Mr. John Furz with the message, "My master bids me tell you you have a soft place in your head." Later in the day the vicar reported to the Earl of Pembroke that "There is a young fellow in the town, who, under a pretense of preaching, makes three riots every week, and disturbs all the inhabitants from one end to the other."²⁵ Howell Harris went to church on a Sabbath and heard himself pointed out as "a minister of the devil, an enemy to God, to the church, and to all mankind."²⁶ Moreover, numerous mention is made by the Wesleys and their associates of going to church and hearing sermons against the Methodists or against themselves personally. By these, however, the Methodists were undaunted, but pressed forward wherever duty called.

But all the ministers did not stop with words. Some of them used violence. One took John Nelson by the collar, pulled him down from his preaching place, and tore his clothes consider-

²⁰Charles Wesley, *Journal*, February 10, 1748; Jackson's *Lives*, vol. iii, pp. 101ff.

²¹Charles Wesley, *Journal*, August 21, 1748.

²²Above, chapters vii and viii.

²³John Wesley, *Journal*, August 24, 1743.

²⁴*Ibid.*, March 11, 1745.

²⁵*Arminian Magazine*, 1782, p. 570.

²⁶John Bulmer, *Memoirs of Howell Harris*, p. 31.

ably.²⁷ Others exerted themselves in raising and leading mobs. At Devizes the curate rang the bells backward to call the mob together.²⁸ At Tealby the minister hired a mob in order "to give the finishing stroke to Methodism."²⁹ At Shepton John Wesley was informed that the curate had hired a silly man with a few drunken companions to make a disturbance.³⁰ The attitude of the minister at Wednesbury is quite well known.³¹ Of him Charles Wesley says, "Their unhappy minister was the contriver of it all."³²

At Colne, in order to assemble the mob, the minister had posted the following proclamation: "Notice is hereby given that, if any man be mindful to enlist into his Majesty's service, under the command of the Reverend Mr. George White, Commander-in-Chief, and John Bannister, Lieutenant-General of his Majesty's forces for the defense of the Church of England, and the support of the manufactory in and about Colne, both which are now in danger, let him repair to the drum head at the Cross, where each man shall have a pint of ale for advance, and other proper encouragements." This mob, "hired for the purpose and headed by the parson," disturbed Mr. Grimshaw while preaching.³³

There are accounts of mobs, headed by the clergy or hired by them as late as 1773.³⁴ About this time, or a little later, as we shall see, the attitude of the clergy changed somewhat and opposition ceased, or at least became milder.

The Methodists, moreover, frequently were repelled from the Sacrament, though they were members of the Church of England. At Temple Church Charles Wesley was told by the

²⁷John Nelson, *Journal*, pp. 78ff.

²⁸Southey, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, pp. 47ff.

²⁹Methodist Magazine, 1798, pp. 478ff.

³⁰John Wesley, *Journal*, August 6, 1746.

³¹Above, pp. 88, 93.

³²Charles Wesley, *Journal*, June 24, 1743.

³³J. Crother, *Methodist Manual*, p. 46, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. cxlii.

³⁴Jackson's Lives, vol. v, p. 46.

minister, "I repel you from the sacrament."³⁵ And once when he went forward to take the sacrament the clerk came forward and cried out, "Avant, Satan, avant!" Wesley, finding that nothing would quiet the clerk, withdrew to his pew and the service ended.³⁶

While at Epworth John Wesley sent to the curate to inform him that they desired to take the communion on the following Sunday. The minister, though he was under great obligation to the Wesley family, sent back the answer, "Tell Mr. Wesley that I shall not give him the sacrament, for he is not fit."³⁷ To us this seems a very strange answer, coming as it did from a drunken curate and applied to a man of such self-denial and purity of character as Wesley. It is probable, however, that the curate laid the emphasis, not upon what the man was, but upon what he believed, and Wesley taught doctrines of faith and of life, of which it is very improbable that Mr. Romley was able to comprehend the meaning.

Occasionally a curate fell under the influence of the Methodists, and began to preach and to live as they did. One of these was warned that "Unless he kept away from this people, he must leave his curacy."³⁸ Some were dismissed. One of these was Dr. Coke,³⁹ who then determined to cast in his lot with the people for the principles of whom he had been cast out. He became a very able helper of Wesley, both in England and in America.

It is impossible to single out any one group of the clergy and to say that ecclesiastical opposition began here, for it seems to have begun among them all at about the same time. With the others the bishops were equally, if not more responsible than the lower clergy for the sufferings of the Methodists. Their influence was greater, and because of this they doubtless could

³⁵Charles Wesley, *Journal*, July 27, 1740.

³⁶H. Moore, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 18.

³⁷Southey, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 21.

³⁸John Wesley, *Journal*, November 1, 1767.

³⁹*Ibid.*, August 19, 1777.

have checked disturbances had they so desired. There is no trace of any united effort to do this. On the other hand, some of them, by their utterances, actually urged on the opposition.

In June of 1739 a bishop had forbidden a minister to allow any of the Methodists to preach in his church, and the Bishop of London had authorized forcible exclusion.⁴⁰ Before the Wednesday riots the minister had "heard a vehement visitation-charge,"⁴¹ which added to the intensity of his opposition. In 1750 John Wesley wrote as follows to the Bishop of Exeter: "Against whom does your Lordship arm the ministers of all denominations, particularly our brethren of the Established Church, inciting them to point us out to our several congregations as not fit to live upon the earth? The effects of this have already appeared in many parts, both in Devonshire and Cornwall. Nor have I known any considerable riot in any part of England for which such preaching did not pave the way."⁴² This was Bishop Lavington, whose *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*, as will be shown later, was so bitter and violent as unavoidably to stir up strife. The Bishop of Cork openly entered the list against the Methodists.⁴³ A formidable attack came from the Bishop of London, who in a pastoral letter warned his people against the Methodists, and made severe charges against these people.⁴⁴ Bishops forbade their clergy to allow the Methodists to preach in their churches, and some bishops would not allow the minister to admit a Methodist preacher to the communion table.⁴⁵

There is an interesting anecdote in connection with Whitefield, toward whom, because of his popularity and recognized oratorical powers, the bishops were especially antagonistic.⁴⁶

⁴⁰Charles Wesley, *Journal*, June 19, 1739.

⁴¹John Wesley, *Works*, Letter to J. Smith.

⁴²*Ibid.*, Letter to Bishop of Exeter, par. 13.

⁴³*Ibid.*, Letter to Mr. Baily, par. 13.

⁴⁴J. J. Ellis, *John Wesley*, p. 69; *John Wesley, Works*, Letter to Bishop of London.

⁴⁵John Wesley, *Journal*, June 1, 1777.

⁴⁶*Life and Times of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. i, p. 38.

Therefore they were anxious to silence him. Lord Bolingbroke is quoted as saying in a letter to the Countess of Huntingdon that "the King has recommended to his Grace of Canterbury that Mr. Whitefield should be advanced to the [Bishop's] Bench as the only means of putting an end to his preaching." Bolingbroke adds: "What a keen—what a biting remark! but how just and how well-earned by those mitred lords!"⁴⁷

As already mentioned, during all those turbulent times some of the clergy, though few indeed, were friendly. Yet in later years others, even those who had been violent persecutors, became more favorable. Bishop Gibson was a steady friend of the Established Church, and an opponent of the Methodists, yet he was always a great enemy to persecution.⁴⁸ Occasionally a minister was the means of quieting the mob.⁴⁹ Even Dr. Borlase, who had been such a bitter persecutor,⁵⁰ reformed, and in 1757 Wesley learned that he no longer persecuted the Methodists, nor would allow anyone else to do so. Moreover, in a late famine he had relieved the sufferings of a great number of the poor.⁵¹

Near the close of Wesley's life there was a remarkable change in the attitude of the clergy toward him and his work. Persecution had not ceased. There was still enough of it to keep the Methodists humiliated, but the change was so marked as to cause Wesley to wonder whether the shame of the cross had ceased. In 1778 a minister not only allowed Wesley to preach in his church but also offered him a bed at his house.⁵² By 1780 there are very frequent references to his preaching in churches. In 1783 and again in 1789 Wesley says that the tide has so turned that he had more invitations to preach in churches than he could accept.⁵³ In 1790 a clergyman was willing that

⁴⁷Life and Times of Countess of Huntingdon, vol. i, p. 38; vol. ii, pp. 179, 282.

⁴⁸Whitehead, Life of John Wesley, p. 125.

⁴⁹Charles Wesley, Journal, February 5, 1747.

⁵⁰John Wesley, Journal, June 21, 1745.

⁵¹Ibid., September 21, 1757.

⁵²Ibid., April 14, 1778.

⁵³Ibid., January 19, 1783; December 27, 1789.

Wesley should preach in his church, but was afraid of offending the bishop. A gentleman asked the bishop whether he had any objection to it, and he replied, "None at all."⁵⁴ However, as previously noticed, at this same time the Methodists were having trouble enough,⁵⁵ and Wesley seems to think the bishop responsible for it. He says, "They desire a license to worship God after their own conscience. Your Lordship refuses it, and then punishes them for not having it."⁵⁶ In this also the bishop failed, through interference by the King's court, and the Methodists were allowed to pursue their worship unmolested.

If the clergy were chiefly responsible for the mobs, certainly the justices and magistrates were close seconds, for they had the power and authority to quell the disturbances, yet often they would take no action at all, refusing warrants to those who applied for them, and in some cases they themselves stirred up the basest of the people to violence. Some times they refused to act unless the injured would forsake the Methodists,⁵⁷ Others refused to act at all, as at Cork, Wednesbury, etc., and by this means encouraged the rioters. The magistrates and ministers seem usually to have worked together,⁵⁸ and quite frequently the gentry could be included in this group.⁵⁹ In 1745, while Wesley was preaching, some "were as rude as they dared to be, having none of the great vulgar to set them on."⁶⁰ Later in his life he speaks very frequently of disturbances while he was preaching by some who by the courtesy of England are called gentlemen, implying that notwithstanding their rank in society, he esteemed them vulgar. He speaks of a lawyer who disturbed him while preaching;⁶¹ of a gentleman, who sent for him and told him that "he would hire a mob to pull the house down, for we were

⁵⁴John Wesley, Journal, October 20, 1790.

⁵⁵Above, p. 14.

⁵⁶John Wesley, Works, Letter to Bishop of —, June 26, 1790.

⁵⁷John Wesley, Journal, May 25, 1743.

⁵⁸Christian History, vol. vii, sec. 2, pp. 16ff.

⁵⁹Coke & Moore, Life of John Wesley, pp. 202ff.

⁶⁰John Wesley, Journal, May 10, 1745.

⁶¹Ibid., September 3, 1745.

the most disturbing dogs in the nation," and of "having been threatened more and more, especially by the gentry, who say they will send us for soldiers." He tells of a justice who encouraged the mob, of a mayor who behaved badly, of a squire who, when the vicar announced that Wesley was to preach in the church, objected and compelled the preacher to go elsewhere, of a magistrate who directed the mob, "Do what you will, then, so you break no bones."⁶² Also the conduct of the justices who condemned John Nelson to serve as a soldier must be remembered.⁶³ Moreover, it was two justices that fined the Methodists so heavily in 1790, and which caused Wesley, now an old man, so much anxiety.⁶⁴ Together these groups of men stirred up a great deal of strife in England, and caused intense suffering on the part of the Methodists. However, through the courage, the devotion, and the spirit of sacrifice on the part of both preachers and people, they surmounted all obstacles placed before them, terrible as they were, and in time changed the attitude of nearly all England toward themselves. Toward the close of Wesley's life many of the clergy were friends who had been persecutors.

⁶²John Wesley, *Journal*, April 9, 1755; July 29, 1764; March 18, 1768; July 8, 1761.

⁶³Above, pp. 139ff.

⁶⁴John Wesley, *Works*, Letter to Member of Parliament.

CHAPTER XI

THE UNIVERSITY AND THE METHODISTS

It is well known that the three great leaders of the Methodist movement were associated together at Oxford University, and that it was there that the name "Methodist" was first applied to them, and to the group with which they were associated, and which they had gathered about themselves.

In order to understand better the relationship of events at Oxford a few dates will be helpful. In 1720 John Wesley was elected a student at Christ Church College, Oxford;¹ in 1725, August 19, he was ordained deacon by Dr. Potter, Bishop of Oxford;² on March 17, 1726, he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford;³ and at the same time his brother, Charles, was elected a student of Christ Church College.⁴ John Wesley proceeded to the Master of Arts February 14, 1727,⁵ and from August of that year he was his father's curate at Wroote till November, 1729, when he returned to the university, where he remained till he sailed for America. From the time of his election as a student in 1726, Charles Wesley remained at Oxford continually till he, with his brother, sailed for Georgia in 1735.

Notwithstanding the influence of his brother, Charles Wesley admitted that his first year at Oxford was lost in diversions. Later, however, he became studious and serious. By study, by devotions, and by correspondence with his brother, who was then his father's curate, he sought the best method of procedure. In due time he became settled in his religious convictions, and

¹John Whitehead, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 235.

²*Ibid.*, p. 244.

³*Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 252.

shortly afterward gathered about himself a small group of friends, who were of the same mind. He says of himself: "I went to the weekly sacrament, and persuaded two or three young students to accompany me, and to observe the method of study prescribed by the Statutes of the University. This gained for me the harmless name of 'Methodist.' In half a year after this my brother left his curacy at Epworth, and came to our assistance. We then proceeded regularly in our studies, and in doing what good we could to the bodies and souls of men."⁶ Dr. Whitehead says: "The following particulars appear evident: 1. That he [Charles] was awakened to a most serious and earnest desire of being truly religious and devoted to God while his brother was at Epworth as his father's curate; 2. that he observed an exact method in his studies, and in his attendance on the duties of religion, receiving the sacrament once a week; 3. that he persuaded two or three young gentlemen to join him in these things, among whom, I believe, Morgan was one; 4. that the exact method and order which he observed in spending his time, and regulating his conduct gained him the name 'Methodist.' Hence it appears that Charles Wesley was the first Methodist, and laid the foundation of that little society at Oxford, which afterward made so much noise in the world."⁷ Mr. Jackson says, "They were diligent and methodical in the prosecution of their studies, and in the improvement of their time, unusually sober in their spirit and general deportment, and very regular in their attention to religious duties, particularly the Lord's Supper, which they received every week."⁸ And John Wesley says the name "was first given to three or four young men at Oxford by a student of Christ Church, either in allusion to the ancient sect of physicians, so called from their teaching that almost all diseases might be cured by a specific method of diet and exercise, or from their observing a more regular method of study and behavior than

⁶John Whitehead, *Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. i, p. 72.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁸Thomas Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, p. 31.

was usual with those of their age and station.”⁹ Again he says: “The regularity of their behavior gave occasion to a young gentleman of the college to say, ‘I think we have got a new set of Methodist.’ . . . The name was new and quaint; it clave to them immediately, and from that time both those four young gentlemen and all that had any religious connection with them were distinguished by the name ‘Methodist.’”¹⁰

The name, therefore, because of its quaintness, was first applied in derision to Charles and his friends; and before the return of John to Oxford, the “Methodists,” though not more than three or four in number, were known all over the university.¹¹

John Wesley, in 1725, “was much affected by reading Kempis’ Christian Pattern, and Bishop Taylor’s Rules for Holy Living and Dying.”¹² In 1726-27 Charles was with him at the university, but the elder brother did not succeed in arousing in the younger any response to his own seriousness.¹³ However, when John Wesley returned to the university in 1729 the group was ready and anxious for his leadership, which he naturally and readily assumed, being older than the others, a Master of Arts, a Fellow, and tutor in the college.

As John Wesley joined this group ridicule was heaped upon him together with the others. Mr. Southey says: “His standing and character in the university gave him a degree of credit, and his erudition, his keen logic, and ready speech commanded respect wherever he was known. But no talent—and it may be added, no virtue—can protect the possessor from the ridicule of fools and profligates.”¹⁴ This is strong language,

⁹John Wesley, Works, Character of a Methodist, Introduction, p. 3.

¹⁰Ibid., Sermon on Foundation of City Road Chapel, part ii, par. 2.

¹¹Thomas Jackson, Life of Charles Wesley, p. 31.

¹²John Wesley, Works, Sermon on Foundation of City Road Chapel, part ii, par. 1.

¹³Thos. Jackson, Life of Charles Wesley, p. 31.

¹⁴Robert Southey, Life of John Wesley, vol. i, p. 48.

NOTE—Mr. Southey is frequently quoted in this work, not because he is a “source,” nor necessarily an authority, but chiefly because he was an opponent.

and especially significant, when it is remembered that he was speaking of the personnel of Oxford University. However, as the name "Methodist" found its origin at Oxford, so also did persecution. And it is not improbable that the conduct of the students of the university exerted an influence wholesome toward violence, if not inciting to the terrible outrages that later were heaped upon the Methodists by the more ignorant and degraded rabble.

After John Wesley had become the leader of the Oxford Methodists, led by Mr. Morgan, one of their number, they began to visit the sick, the poor, and the condemned in the prisons. Owing to opposition, John Wesley wrote to his father for advice. The father directed them first to consult with him "who has a jurisdiction over the prisoners, and the next is to obtain the direction and approbation of your bishop."¹⁵ Consequently, they consulted Mr. Gerard, chaplain to the bishop, and Mr. Gerard consulted the bishop, who "not only gave his permission, but was highly pleased with the undertaking, and hoped it would have the desired success."¹⁶

Whitefield says that "sheltered by such respectable authority, they thought themselves secure, and prosecuted their design with diligence."¹⁷ But this authority did not allay the persecution. Wits now entered the field against them. Hence they were "objects both of ridicule and censure, and were known in the university as the Reforming Club, the Godly Club, Sacramentarians, Bible Moths, Supererogation Men, and the Enthusiasts, so that some of them found it difficult to maintain their ground amidst the raillery and invective with which they were treated."¹⁸

But most of the opposition "being persons of well-known characters, they made no proselytes from the sacrament till a

¹⁵John Whitehead, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 260.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 261.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Thomas Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, one-volume edition, p. 42; also, Whitehead, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, pp. 261ff; Henry Moore, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, pp. 169 and 175.

gentleman, eminent for learning, and well esteemed for piety, joining them, told his nephew that if he dared to go to the weekly communion any longer, he would turn him out of doors. This argument had no success; the young gentleman communicated next week. The uncle now became more violent, and shook his nephew by the throat to convince him more effectively that receiving the sacrament every week was founded in error. But this argument appearing to the young gentleman to have no weight in it, he continued his usual practice." The uncle now changed his tactics, and "by a soft and obliging manner" "melted down the young gentleman's resolution of being so strictly religious, and from this time he began to absent himself five Sundays out of six from the sacrament." "This success gave the opposition new strength, and one of the seniors of the college, consulting with the doctor, they prevailed with two other young gentlemen to promise they would only communicate three times a year."¹⁹

The opposition therefore became more serious still by some persons of influence taking so decided a part against them.²⁰ Henry Moore says: "In the beginning of 1731 a meeting was held by several of the seniors of the college to consult on the speediest way to stop the progress of enthusiasm in it. Wesley and his friends did not learn what was the result of this very pious consultation, but it was soon publicly reported that Dr. — and the censors were going to blow up the Godly Club."²¹

This continued opposition led the two brothers to write again to their father for further council. Among other suggestions the father advised them "to use great mildness toward their persecutors, but at the same time to avoid a mean or sneaking behavior, and rather to show an open, manly firmness, which is highly becoming in a mind conscious of acting well." In answer to this Wesley wrote his father: "We all return you our sincere thanks for your timely and necessary advice; and should

¹⁹John Whitehead, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, pp. 261, 262.

²⁰*Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 262.

²¹Henry Moore, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 175.

be exceedingly glad if it were as easy to follow it as it is impossible not to approve it." ²²

In 1732 Whitefield went up to the university. He says the Methodists "were then much talked of at Oxford," ²³ and before going there he had heard of them, and notwithstanding their unpopularity, he had admired them. Without connecting himself with them, he began to follow their example, and "to receive the sacrament at a parish church near our college, and at the castle where the despised Methodists used to receive once a month." He adds that he "strenuously defended them" when he "heard them reviled by the students," and was "strongly inclined to follow their good example" when he "saw them go through a ridiculing crowd to receive the holy sacrament at Saint Mary's." ²⁴

To quote his journal again, he says: "The first thing I was called to give up for His dear Name's sake was what the world calls my fair reputation; for I had no sooner received the sacrament publicly on a week day at Saint Mary's but I was set up as a mark for all the polite students that knew me to shoot at. Soon after I also incurred the displeasure of the master of the college, who frequently chid, and once threatened to expel me, if ever I visited the poor again." ²⁵ Whitefield replied hastily, "Sir, if it displeaseth you, I will go no more," but adds: "My heart smote me immediately. I repented and went again. He heard of it and threatened; but for fear he should be looked upon as a persecutor, let me alone." ²⁶ But he says: "I daily underwent some contempt from the collegians. Some have thrown dirt at, and others took away their pay from me." ²⁷

In December, 1740, a student, Charles Casper Graves by

²²John Whitehead, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 263; Henry Moore, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 171.

²³George Whitefield, *Journal*, p. 10, 1756 edition.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 12ff.

²⁶Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield*, vol. ii, p. 504.

²⁷George Whitefield, *Journal*, p. 13.

NOTE—Whitefield was a servitor at the college.

name, in order to receive his testimonial from the university was compelled to sign a paper containing the following declarations: "I, Charles Casper Graves, do hereby declare that I do renounce the modern practice and principles of the persons commonly called Methodists, namely, of preaching in fields, of assembling together and expounding the Holy Scriptures in private houses and elsewhere than in churches, in an irregular and disorderly manner, and their pretensions to an extraordinary inspiration and inward feeling of the Holy Spirit. I do further declare my conformity to the liturgy of the Church of England and my unfeigned assent and consent to the articles thereof, commonly called the Thirty-Nine Articles. Lastly, I do declare that I am heartily sorry that I have given offense and scandal by frequenting the meetings and attending the expositions of the persons commonly called Methodists, and that I will not frequent their meetings, nor attend their expositions for the future, nor take upon me to preach and expound the Scripture in the manner practised by them."²⁸

In August, 1742, Mr. Graves published a full retraction of this pledge. Of this only the first paragraph is quoted here. It is as follows: "I believe myself indispensably obliged openly to declare before God and the world that the motives whereby I was induced to sign that paper were partly a sinful fear of man; partly an improper deference to the judgment of those whom I accounted wiser than myself, and lastly a resolution that, if my own judgment should be at any time better informed, I would then openly retract in the presence of God and man whatever I should be convinced I had said and done amiss. Accordingly, having now had (besides a strong conviction immediately consequent thereon) many opportunities of informing my judgment better, and being fully convinced of my fault, I do hereby declare my sincere repentance for my wicked compliance with those oppressive men, who without any color of law divine or human, imposed such a condition of receiving a testimonial upon me."

²⁸John Wesley, *Journal*, August 16, 1742.

In the other paragraphs he retracts all the remainder of the paper except the articles and doctrines of the Church of England.²⁹

“On the 4th of April, 1742, Charles Wesley preached in his turn before the University of Oxford.” “Whether he ever preached again in the same place does not appear.”³⁰

Of himself John Wesley says: “Friday, August 24, St. Bartholomew’s Day, I preached for the last time before the University of Oxford (1744) . . .³¹ it being determined that when my next turn to preach came they would pay another person to preach for me. And so they did twice or thrice, even to the time that I resigned my fellowship.”³² This he resigned June 1, 1751,³³ and thus ended forever his connection as a Fellow with the university, which he so greatly admired but which had repudiated him.

At Cambridge, in 1764, there was a group of Methodists of which Rowland Hill was the center. Before going to the university he had become a Methodist of the Calvinistic wing.³⁴ Mr. Hill was the son of Sir Rowland Hill, baronet of Hawkstone, and the brother of Richard Hill, afterward Sir Richard Hill. Consequently, his birth, position, and wealth gave him an influence and a protection which many others did not enjoy. However, Mr. Sidney informs us that “when he entered the university Mr. Rowland Hill soon encountered the contempt he had expected to find there, and frequently he has said that he was, merely on account of his religion, such a marked and hated

²⁹John Wesley, *Journal*, August 16, 1742.

³⁰Thomas Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, pp. 250, 251.

³¹NOTE—Just eighty-two years earlier to a day occurred the ejection of about two thousand dissenting ministers from the pulpits of the Church of England. Among these were both of Wesley’s grandfathers, the first John Wesley, and Dr. Samuel Annesley. A great-grandfather also was ejected about the same time. (John Wesley, *Works*, *History of People Called Methodist*, par. 30.)

³²John Wesley, *Works*, *History of People Called Methodist*, par. 30; also *Journal*, August 24, 1744.

³³John Wesley, *Journal*, June 1, 1751.

³⁴Edwin Sidney, *Life of Rev. Rowland Hill*, p. 40.

person that nobody in the college even gave him a cordial smile, except the old shoeblick at the gate, who had the love of Christ in his heart.”³⁵

Mr. Hill seems not to have been alone very long. He succeeded in persuading some of his fellow students to join him. But his “efforts were not confined to the gownsmen of the university; he visited the jail and the sick, and commenced speaking in several place in Cambridge and in the adjacent villages. This unusual proceeding of an undergraduate brought down on him the severest censure from his college, and insults from the populace of the town.”³⁶

In 1767 matters seem to have reached a crisis. Tyerman quotes Whitefield as writing: “There is hot work at Cambridge. One dear youth is likely to be expelled. Mr. Lee is suspended without private admonition or having a moment’s warning.”³⁷ And again he writes, “Our dear Penty [probably Mr. Pentycross, a college friend of Rowland Hill] is under the cross at Cambridge.”³⁸ Mr. Rowland Hill is mentioned as preaching at one time when “some gownsmen were there, but were permitted to do no more than gnash with their teeth.”³⁹ A friend writes him concerning the college as follows: “The sum of their determination concerning me may be comprised in these few words—that I immediately return to college, and that unless they receive a letter of my recanting my present principles, which they (who know not what they say nor whereof they affirm) declare are contrary to the doctrines of the Christian Church, I am to have no further benefit from them, and my exhibition of thirty pounds to be withdrawn.”⁴⁰ We are not told that the recantation was made, nor that the exhibition was withdrawn. The superiors of Mr. Hill “in the university condemned in the

³⁵Edwin Sidney, *Life of Rev. Rowland Hill*, p. 34.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 36ff.

³⁷Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield*, vol. ii, p. 535.

³⁸Edwin Sidney, *Life of Rowland Hill*, p. 46.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 46, 47.

strongest terms his infringement of discipline. Hints of a refusal of testimonials, and even degree were held out as the probable result of his irregularities."⁴¹ His sister is quoted as writing to a friend that "to such a deplorable apostasy is the world come that young men who are steadfastly attached to the church and live exemplary lives can hardly get their testimonials signed for orders."⁴² And from letters of Whitefield, probably to Mr. Hill, he was threatened with expulsion. Whitefield says: "If the expulsion should be permitted, it will take, I believe, only for a little time, and soon be repented of."⁴³ "By your brother Peter's letter, the hour of expulsion is not yet come. Surely, they will not be so imprudent, or act so contrary to the laws of English liberty. I long to know what statutes they say you have broken."⁴⁴ From this it appears that the opposition grew stronger. However, Mr. Hill was not expelled. In January, 1769, he received his degree, and on June 6, 1773, was admitted to orders,⁴⁵ and soon became one of the leading preachers of England.

The Oxford and Cambridge Methodists were in close relations with each other, and, as their leaders corresponded, each group was familiar with the proceedings of the other. Each group knew of the threatenings at the other university.⁴⁶ These threats appear to have been much the same. Only at Oxford the threatenings were put into execution, and on March 11, 1768, six students were expelled.

It appears that the Oxford Methodists were accustomed to meet for religious exercises at the home of a Mrs. Durbridge, the widow of a friend of Whitefield. The leader of this group was Dr. Stillingfleet, Fellow of Merton College, and afterward Prebendary of Worcester College and a writer. He was a friend of Lady Huntingdon. He expounded the Scriptures and prayed,

⁴¹Edwin Sidney, *Life of Rev. Rowland Hill*, p. 40.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁴³George Whitefield, *Works*, Letter dated London, August 26, 1767.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, Letter, London, October 23, 1767.

⁴⁵Edwin Sidney, *Life of Rowland Hill*, pp. 55 and 94.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 49; *Life of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. i, pp. 421ff.

and invited the students to do the same, to which they complied. This, together with their piety, unusual for the time, their zeal and their preaching in the neighborhood, excited the ridicule of the townsmen, and raised a storm about them in the university.⁴⁷ These students were Mr. Hallward, of Worcester College; Mr. Foster, of Queen's College; Mr. Pugh, of Herford College; Mr. Gordon, of Magdalene College; Mr. Clark, of Saint John's College, besides the six students who suffered expulsion.⁴⁸

It was in the autumn of 1767 that their meetings became known to the authorities of the university. They then were threatened with the loss of standing, of degrees, of orders, and of expulsion, but some of them thought it cowardly to desist merely because their conduct attracted opposition.⁴⁹ However, Mr. Richard Hill declares, and no one denies, that the six students who were expelled "did abstain as soon as ever they were told that their meetings were contrary to the will of those who had the authority over them in the university, and not one of them had been present at any such meetings for some months before their expulsion, but all declared it was their determination not to attend them again."⁵⁰

It was in the spring of 1768 that the storm broke upon them with all its fury. But the fury of the storm was directed against six poor men of Saint Edmund Hall, who were without influential friends to support them. The others, who were in more favorable circumstances, were permitted to complete their college training without interruption.⁵¹

⁴⁷Edwin Sidney, *Life of Rowland Hill*, p. 49; *Life of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. i, p. 421ff.; also Dr. Nowell's *Answer to Pietas Oxoniensis*, pp. 24, 25, 117.

⁴⁸*Life of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. i, p. 422.

A good account of this may be found in Chapter V of the Rev. Edwin Sidney's *Life of Sir Richard Hill, Bart.*

⁴⁹*Ibid.*; also Sidney, *Life of Rowland Hill*, p. 49.

⁵⁰Richard Hill, *Pietas Oxoniensis*, p. 23; also *Answer to same* by Dr. Thomas Nowell, p. 45.

⁵¹Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield*, vol. ii, p. 544; Dr. Nowell's *Answer to Pietas Oxoniensis*, pp. 23ff.; *Pietas Oxoniensis*, pp. 26ff.

The trouble was started by Mr. John Higson, M.A., vice-principal and tutor of Saint Edmund Hall, a person who was subject to attacks of insanity. He first complained to the principal of the Hall, Dr. Dixon, "that there were several enthusiasts in that society who talked of regeneration, inspiration, and drawing nigh to God."⁵² The principal, who knew the righteous lives of the pupils, passed over the complaint as an indication of recurring insanity. Mr. Higson then complained to David Durell, D.D., vice-chancellor of the university and visitor of Saint Edmund Hall, who listened with sympathetic ear, and proceeded to form a court, to appoint a time for the hearing, and to bring the young men to trial.⁵³

The conclave consisted of Dr. David Durell, vice-chancellor of the university and visitor of Saint Edmund Hall; Dr. Thomas Randolph, president of Corpus Christi College, etc.; Dr. Thomas Nowell, principal of Saint Mary's Hall; Dr. Thomas Fothergill, provost of Queen's College, and the Rev. Francis Atterbury, M.A., senior proctor of the university. The students arraigned were Benjamin Kay, James Matthews, Thomas Jones, Thomas Grove, Erasmus Middleton, Benjamin Blatch,⁵⁴ and Joseph Shipman.⁵⁵ They were cited to appear before the court by a notice on the door of the Hall chapel.⁵⁶ Dr. Dixon, who as principal of their Hall knew them personally, "defended their doctrines from the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Established Church, and spoke in the highest terms of the piety and exemplariness of their lives. But his motion was overruled and sentence pronounced against them."⁵⁷ At the conclusion of the trial the

⁵²*Pietas Oxoniensis*, pp. 8ff.; Nowell's Answer, p. 10.

⁵³Nowell's Answer, p. 18.

⁵⁴NOTE—Benjamin Blatch was not a Methodist. Very little is said of him, except that he was dismissed as not having had any school learning, and not being certain whether he should pursue a profession. (Nowell's Answer, p. 26.)

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁵⁶*Pietas Oxoniensis*, p. 14; Nowell's Answer, p. 21.

⁵⁷Letter quoted in *Goliath Slain*, by Richard Hill, p. 193, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. cclvii; *Pietas Oxoniensis*, preface, p. 5; Whitefield, Letter to Dr. Durell, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, p. 21.

vice-chancellor was heard to say to Mr. Higson that for his good work the whole university was much obliged to him.⁵⁸

The vice-chancellor of the university, as noted above, was also visitor of Saint Edmund Hall, to which these students were attached.⁵⁹ The depositions were made before him as visitor of the Hall, and not as vice-chancellor of the university, for the trial "was never pretended to be an university act; to constitute it such, it must have had the sanction of convocation, to which this complaint was not, nor, indeed, could with any propriety be submitted."⁶⁰ He pronounced the sentence by his visitorial authority, in which capacity alone he acted by the advice of the Heads of Houses. Thus it appears not to have been considered a university affair, but merely a matter relating and confined to the one Hall.

The expulsion created a great stir. The periodicals of the time published accounts of it, and commented thereon. The friends of the young men sent letters to these papers, and some, who were not Methodists, wrote in behalf of the young men and in behalf of what they believed to be justice.⁶¹ Also pamphlets and books were written in defense of the expelled students. In these communications some very uncomplimentary statements were made, which reveal to us an exceedingly unsavory condition existing at the university. In some the vice-chancellor and his court were vigorously assailed and unsparingly condemned. Indeed, the publicity given to the affair, together with the vigor and strength of the attacks, compelled the university men to take the field and to write in their own defense. It is through these pamphlets and books of both parties that one is able to discern the real issue at stake.

As the students were of the Calvinistic branch of Methodism, naturally Whitefield was the first of the pamphleteers to write

⁵⁸Richard Hill, *Goliath Slain*, p. 193; *Nowell's Answer*, p. 16.

⁵⁹*Nowell's Answer*, p. 18.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶¹See *Goliath Slain*, pp. 193ff.; also *Life of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. i, p. 423.

in their behalf. On April 12, 1768, he published an open letter of fifty pages to Dr. Durell, the vice-chancellor of the university, defending the students.⁶² This is a production of considerable strength, which appealed both to Scripture and to reason. Of course he does not deny that they held Methodist doctrines of the Calvinistic type, but he maintains that these are the doctrines of the Church of England, and quotes the liturgy to prove his contention. He does not deny that at times they used extempore prayer, but he says, if that at all times is wrong, "what sinners, what great sinners, must they have been who prayed and that too out of necessity in an extempore way before any forms of prayer were or could be printed or heard of!"⁶³ He condemns the expulsion as contrary both to the laws of man and of God.

A former member of the university, who signs himself "W. C.," answered Whitefield.⁶⁴ This is a weak attempt of sixty-two pages at vindication, but a vociferous, and rather vulgar attack upon the Methodists, and upon Methodist doctrine, which the author is pleased to call "enthusiastic rant."⁶⁵ It shows considerably more spleen than mental penetration or accuracy.

On May 14, 1768, the defense published another pamphlet of sixteen pages entitled *A Vindication of the Proceedings against the Six Members of Edmund Hall*, by a Gentleman of the University.⁶⁶ This is a courteous and well-written document. From it one gathers that the university made its own laws to cover these cases, and determined of itself and by itself what was a violation of these laws, and who was guilty in case of violation. It also determined, so far as itself was concerned, what were the doctrines of the Church of England, or, rather,

⁶²Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. cclvii.

⁶³Whitefield's Letter to Dr. Durell, p. 10, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. cclvii.

⁶⁴Remarks upon Mr. Whitefield's Letter to Dr. Durell, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. cclvii.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 2.

⁶⁶Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vols. clxvii and cclvii.

how those doctrines were to be interpreted. In March, 1769, a second edition of this pamphlet was published with notes and an appendix.⁶⁷

On June 1, 1768, the strongest attack of all was made upon the court that expelled the students by Mr. Richard Hill, afterward Sir Richard Hill, who was a Master of Arts from the University of Oxford. Unfortunately, like his younger brother Rowland, Mr. Richard Hill was rather an intemperate writer, and somewhat given to extravagance of expression, but his pamphlet or book of one hundred and two octavo pages, entitled *Pietas Oxoniensis*,⁶⁸ was so vigorous and so much to the point that the monthly reviewers demanded an answer. One of them says: "This is a well-digested and specious defense of the students. We look upon it to be a pamphlet of such dangerous tendency that it ought to be fully answered and refuted by the gentlemen of Oxford, who are so freely attacked in it."⁶⁹ Like Whitefield, Mr. Hill used considerable space in defending the doctrine of predestination. Yet he reserved sufficient room to make some very pointed arguments, and to ask some exceedingly annoying questions. This called forth the answer demanded by the reviewers.

At the trial one of the assessors, Dr. Thomas Nowell, took notes of the proceedings chiefly for his own convenience,⁷⁰ and these remain the record of the trial. Being practically forced into the field, Dr. Nowell published a one-hundred-and-fifty-octavo-page answer to *Pietas Oxoniensis*, September 10, 1768. It is a straightforward account of the matter, though not entirely unprejudiced, and serves better than anything else published to show the real attitude of the authorities of the university. Dr. Nowell had the great advantage of having been present at the trial, and of having notes upon it. Hence he could write from

⁶⁷Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. clxvii.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, vols. clxvii and cclvii.

⁶⁹Quoted by Mr. Hill, Appended to *Pietas Oxoniensis*, p. 100.

⁷⁰Nowell's Answer to *Pietas Oxoniensis*, p. 13, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol cclvii.

first-hand information.⁷¹ After the pronouncement of expulsion two of the young men went to the vice-chancellor and asked for a copy of the articles of accusation. This the vice-chancellor refused to give.⁷² Mr. Hill got the articles as accurately as possible from those who were present at the trial, and as they remembered them. Whitefield asserts that the students "were hissed at, pushed about, and treated in a manner that the vilest criminal is not allowed to be treated whether at the Old Bailey or any court of justice in the kingdom."⁷³

Another matter of interest lies in the fact that one of their accusers who had become drunken and had spoken disparagingly of the Bible, had expressed sentiments of skepticism, and who was known in the Hall as "the infidel," by signing a recantation of his errors, was excused and later was promoted to orders.⁷⁴ Also there were other and flagrant instances of the grossest immorality which were passed over unnoticed, while the Methodist students, against whose character no complaint was made, were thus severely punished. Mr. Hill well laments that fathering illegitimate children should have been passed over without expulsion, while administering the holy sacrament to an ass, for which the perpetrator was expelled, should thus be ranked with reading, praying extempore and expounding the Scriptures in a private house.⁷⁵

It is asserted too by all the university writers that these students were illiterate, thus classing them all together. Samuel Johnson says of them, "Sir, they were examined, and found to

⁷¹NOTE—In this chapter nothing is positively asserted concerning the expulsion of these students except what is acknowledged, or at least not denied, by Dr. Nowell.

⁷²Pietas Oxoniensis, p. 14; Nowell's Answer, p. 15.

⁷³George Whitefield, Letter to Dr. Durell, p. 19, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. cclvii.

NOTE—Dr. Nowell says that there was no mistreatment during the trial and while sentence was pronounced. But he does not say a word about what happened afterward. (See Nowell's Answer, pp. 143, 144, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. cclvii.)

⁷⁴Pietas Oxoniensis, pp. 31ff.; Nowell's Answer, pp. 57ff.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 26ff.; Nowell's Answer, p. 50.

be mighty ignorant fellows," and for this reason he believed that their expulsion "was extremely just and proper."⁷⁶ This statement was made four years after the expulsion, and coming from such a source indicates that the general impression was false, as will be shown later. In this the university writers were unfair, as is shown by the articles of expulsion compared with statements by their friends, which were not denied.

Following this answer by Dr. Nowell, on December 8, 1768, Mr. Hill published another pamphlet of two hundred and fourteen pages entitled *Goliath Slain*.⁷⁷ This is even more vigorous than *Pietas Oxoniensis*. It deals extensively with the doctrinal and legal phase of the matter, and also makes some strong and new arguments, and asks some more pointed and embarrassing questions. This was not answered.

Besides these there were other pamphlets, dialogues, satires, and short articles. Apparently the most popular production of the defense and by far the keenest satire of the whole controversy was a pamphlet entitled *Priestcraft Defended: A Sermon Occasioned by the Expulsion of Six Young Gentlemen from the University of Oxford, for Praying, Reading, and Expounding the Scriptures*.⁷⁸ It was written under the nom de plume of "The Shaver." The writer pretends to be an illiterate barber, who had turned preacher for the occasion, yet the keenness of his satire, his learning, and the consistency of his style show him to have been a man of culture.⁷⁹ This "Sermon" went through at least twelve editions. The last, "corrected and much enlarged," was published in 1771, which shows that the controversy continued unabated for at least three years. The preacher takes for his text the account of the expulsion of the six students as it was given in the *Saint James Chronicle*, March

⁷⁶Boswell, *Life of Sam. Johnson*, G. B. Hill edition, vol. ii, p. 214.

⁷⁷Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. cclvii.

⁷⁸Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vols. cclvii and cclxvii.

⁷⁹NOTE—Tyerman mentions the Rev. John MacGowan, minister of Devonshire Square Chapel, London, as the author. (Tyerman, *Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 407. See also *Life of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. i, p. 423.)

17, 1768. He emphasizes the following words of the text: "For holding Methodistical tenets and taking upon them to pray, read, and expound the Scriptures." He argues "that if the vice-chancellor and heads of houses expelled these six offenders for praying to God, it is natural to suppose that they are not guilty of that crime themselves; otherwise they would fall under that reproof of Romans 2. 1." ⁸⁰ "Six students!—What a miracle was it, my beloved, that out of so many hundreds of students as are at Oxford only six should be found guilty of praying, reading, and expounding the Scriptures! This shows the faithfulness of their vigilant tutors, in guarding them against such pernicious practices. Now from this observe: . . .

"1. That those six being expelled, now there are none left in all the colleges who take upon them to pray, read, and expound the Scriptures. Therefore gentlemen may with safety send their sons to that fountain of learning without fearing that they will become religious, there being none left now to ensnare them." ⁸¹ The "preacher" continues in this strain through the entire "sermon."

As said before, the vice-chancellor refused a copy of the articles of accusation to Mr. Jones and Mr. Middleton, who went to him after the pronouncement of the sentence of expulsion and asked for it. But the same opposition that compelled Dr. Nowell to write in the defense of the authorities, also compelled him to publish these articles. They are given here in full that the reader may be his own judge as to the merits of the case. They are as follows:

Before the reverend and worshipful David Durell, Doctor of Divinity, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, Visitor of St. Edmund-Hall in the said University of Oxford, John Higson, Master of Arts, Vice-Principal and Tutor of the said Hall, appointed and admitted as such by Thomas Shaw, Doctor in Divinity, Principal of the said Hall for the time being, in the year of our Lord one

⁸⁰Sermon by The Shaver, p. 11, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. clxvii.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 13.

thousand seven hundred and fifty-one, and approved and confirmed by the reverend and worshipful John Brown, Doctor in Divinity, Vice-Chancellor in the University of Oxford for the time being, as the statutes in that case made and provided direct, begs leave to propound and offer some articles of accusation against the following persons, scholars of the said Hall, Benjamin Kay, James Matthews, Thomas Jones, Thomas Grove, Erasmus Middleton, Benjamin Blatch, and Joseph Shipman, and other matter relative thereto.

1st. That the aforesaid James Matthews, Thomas Jones, and Joseph Shipman were bred to trades, and that the last three mentioned persons, as also Erasmus Middleton and Benjamin Blatch, were at the respective time of entrance in the said Hall, and at present are destitute of such a knowledge in the learned languages as is necessary for performing the usual exercises of said Hall and of the University.

2dly. That the aforesaid Benjamin Kay, James Matthews, Thomas Jones, Thomas Grove, Erasmus Middleton, and Joseph Shipman are enemies to the doctrines and discipline of the Church of England, which appeareth either by their preaching or expounding in or frequenting illicit conventicles, and by several other actions and expressions contrary to the statutes of the University and the laws of this realm.

3dly. That the aforesaid Erasmus Middleton is, moreover, an enemy to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England as appears by his officiating as a minister in holy orders, although a layman, in the parish church at Chevely, or in one of the chapels of ease belonging and appertaining unto the said church of Chevely in the county of Berks, and diocese of Salisbury.

4thly. The aforesaid James Matthews, Erasmus Middleton, and Benjamin Blatch have behaved indecently towards the said Higson, Vice-Principal and Tutor, either by neglecting to attend his lectures, or misbehaving themselves when at them; or by going out of the University without his, the said Higson's leave, contrary to the discipline and good order of the said Hall.

5thly. That the above premises are true, public, and notorious, and what the said parties named jointly and severally know in their consciences to be true.

6thly. That by the statutes and usage of the University the said Hall is notoriously subject to visitation of the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford for the time being.

7thly, and lastly: That the said Higson from a regard to the honor and welfare of the University in general, and the said Hall in particular, and actuated by every principle, religious and civil, makes this application to you the said Vice-Chancellor as Visitor; and not confining himself to any superfluous proof, but only as far as he shall prove in the premises that he may obtain in his prayer, he prays that these persons against whom these articles are exhibited,

may be treated and dealt with according to their demerits, and as the statutes of the Hall and the University require, as far as it shall seem good to your wisdom and justice, humbly imploring the aid of your worship's office.

Oxon. St. Edmund-Hall, February the twenty-ninth, 1768.

J. HIGSON.

Sworn before me on the day
and year above written,

D. DURELL, Vice-Chancellor.⁸²

The following are the notes taken by Dr. Nowell at the trial :

Minutes of the accusation brought against James Matthews, Thomas Jones, Joseph Shipman, Erasmus Middleton, Benjamin Kay, Thomas Grove, and Benjamin Blatch of Edmund-Hall; their accusation, etc.

James Matthews. Accused that he was brought up to the trade of a weaver—that he had kept a tap-house—confessed. Accused that he is totally ignorant of the Greek and Latin languages, which appeared by his declining all examination—said that he had been under the tuition of two clergymen for five years—viz. Mr. Davies and Newton, though it did not appear that he had during that time made any proficiency in learning—was thirty years old—accused of being a reputed Methodist, by the evidence of Mr. Atkins, formerly of Queen's College—that he was assistant to Mr. Davies, a reputed Methodist, that he was instructed by Mr. Fletcher, a reputed Methodist,—that he maintained the necessity of the sensible impulse of the Holy Spirit—that he entered himself of Edmund-Hall with a design to get into holy orders, for which he had offered himself a candidate though he still continues to be wholly illiterate, and incapable of doing the exercises of the Hall—proved—That he had frequented illicit conventicles held in a private house in Oxford⁸³—confessed. He produced two testimonials, one vouched by the Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry, the other by the Bishop of Worcester.

Thomas Jones. Accused that he had been brought up to the

⁸²Nowell's Answer, pp. 18ff., Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. cclvii.

⁸³NOTE—The Methodists contended, and were sustained in their contention by the higher courts of England, that their meetings were not "illicit conventicles." It was one of these meetings that the students attended. The government gave a liberal interpretation to the Toleration Act, and endeavored to grant religious freedom. The King's Bench invariably remitted fines against the Methodists, and never prosecuted them. The university held to the views of the time of Charles II, interpreted the Conventicle Act by the letter of the law, and refused to be governed by the spirit of the Toleration Act.

trade of a barber, which he had followed very lately—confessed—Had made a very small proficiency in Greek and Latin languages—was two years standing and still incapable of performing the statutable exercises of the Hall—that he had been at the meetings at Mrs. Durbridge's—that he had expounded the Scriptures to a mixed congregation at Wheaton-Aston, tho not in holy orders, and prayed extempore. All this he confessed. He urged in his defense that he had asked his Tutor whether he thought it wrong for him to pray or instruct in a private family, and that his Tutor answered, he did not, which, he said, was the reason of his continuing to do it.

Joseph Shipman. Accused that he had been brought up to the trade of a draper, and that he was totally illiterate; which appeared on his examination—accused that he had preached or expounded to a mixed assembly of people, tho not in orders, and prayed extempore—all of which he confessed.

Erasmus Middleton—confesses to have done duty in a chapel of ease belonging to Chevely, not being in holy orders, three years before he entered of the University, but not since. That he was discarded by his father for being connected with the Methodists—That he had been refused orders by the Bishop of Hereford, that he had written a letter to the Bishop acknowledging his fault, and recanting his errors—That he was now in hopes of being reconciled to his father—That he had been maintained by friends, but did not explain who these friends were—accused that he was deficient in learning—that he was attached to Mr. Haweis, who had boasted that they should be able to get him into holy orders. That he holds that faith without works is the sole condition of salvation—that the immediate impulse of the Spirit is to be waited for—that he denies all necessity of work—that he had taken frequent occasion to perplex and vex his Tutor—Part of this charge, especially concerning his tenets, he denied, tho proved by the evidence of two gentlemen of the Hall.⁸⁴

Benjamin Kay. Confesses that he had been present at the meetings held in the house of Mrs. Durbridge where he had heard extempore prayers frequently offered up by one Hewett, a staymaker, that sometimes Mrs. Durbridge had read to them—accused that he endeavored to persuade a young man of Magdalen-College, who was sent into the country for having been tainted with Calvinistic Methodistical principles, to leave his father—that he talked of their meeting with great opposition, meaning from the University—of this there was not sufficient evidence—that he holds the Spirit of God works irresistibly—that once a child of God, always a child of God—

⁸⁴NOTE—One of these was Mr. Welling, against whose "infidelity" Mr. Middleton had complained. (*Pietas Oxoniensis*, p. 31; *Nowell's Answer*, p. 58.)

that he holds absolute election—that he had endeavored to instil the same principles into others, and exhorted them to continue steadfastly in them against all opposition. Some of these tenets he seemed to deny tho it was fully proved by the evidence of Mr. Well-
ing, commoner of the Hall.

Thomas Grove—accused that he had preached to a mixed assembly of people called Methodists, not being in orders, which he confessed, and likewise that he prayed extempore—that he could not fall down upon his knees, and worship God in the form of the church of England, though he thought it a good form; proved by the evidence of Mr. Bromhead.⁸⁵

The above notes were carefully examined when the court met after the trial at the vice-chancellor's lodgings. Some particulars not mentioned in them were recollected, the whole accusation, proof and defense was considered, and a unanimous decision was reached as to the punishment.⁸⁶ The sentence which was pronounced by the vice-chancellor is as follows:

OXFORD, March 11th, 1768.

I. It having appeared to me D. Durell, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and undoubted Visitor of St. Edmund-Hall within the said University, upon due information and examination, that James Matthews of the said Hall had been originally brought up to the trade of a weaver, and afterwards followed the low occupation of keeping a taphouse; that, afterwards, having connected himself with known Methodists, he did, without any the least proficiency in school knowledge, enter himself of St. Edmund-Hall, aforesaid with a design to get into holy orders; and that he still continues to be wholly illiterate, incapable of doing the statutable exercises of the Hall, and consequently more incapable of being qualified for holy orders, for which he had lately offered himself a candidate. Moreover, it having appeared by his own confession that he had frequented illicit conventicles held in a private house in the city of Oxford—therefore, I. D. Durell, by virtue of my Visitatorial power, and with the advice and opinion of the Reverend Thomas Randolph, D.D., President of C. C. C. [Corpus Christi College] and Margaret Professor of Divinity in this University; of the Reverend Thomas Fothergill, D.D., Provost of Queen's College; of the Reverend Thomas Nowell, D.D., Principal of St. Mary-Hall, and public orator; and of the Reverend Francis Atterbury, M.A., Senior Proctor of this University, my several assessors, regularly

⁸⁵Nowell's Answer, pp. 23ff.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 27.

appointed on this occasion, do expel the said James Matthews from the said Hall, and do hereby pronounce him expelled.

II. It having also appeared to me that Thomas Jones of St. Edmund-Hall had been brought up to the trade of a barber, which occupation he followed very lately; that he had made but a small proficiency in learning, and was incapable of performing the statutable exercises of the said Hall; and, moreover, it having appeared by his own confession that he had frequented illicit conventicles in a private house in this town, and that he had himself held an assembly for public worship at Wheaton-Aston, in which he himself, though not in holy orders, had publicly expounded the Holy Scriptures to a mixed congregation, and offered extempore prayers—Therefore, I, D. Durell, by virtue of my Visitatorial power, and with the advice and opinion of each and every one of my assessors, the reverend persons aforementioned, do expel the said Thomas Jones from the said Hall, and hereby pronounce him also expelled.

III. It having also appeared to me that Joseph Shipman of St. Edmund-Hall aforesaid had been a draper; was very illiterate, and incapable of performing the statutable exercises of the said Hall. Moreover, it having appeared by his own confession that he had expounded publicly, though not in holy orders, the Holy Scriptures to a mixed congregation, and offered up extempore prayers—Therefore, I, D. Durell by virtue of my Visitatorial power and with the advice and opinion of each and every one of my assessors, the reverend persons aforementioned, do expel the said Joseph Shipman from the said Hall, and hereby pronounce him also expelled.

IV. It having also appeared to me that Erasmus Middleton of St. Edmund-Hall, aforesaid, by his own confession had formerly officiated in the chapel of ease belonging to the parish of Chevely in the county of Berks, not being in holy orders; that he had been rejected from holy orders by the Bishop of Hereford for the said offense; that he was discarded by his father for being connected with the people called Methodists; and that he still lies under his father's displeasure for the same. Moreover, it having appeared by creditable witnesses that he is still connected with the said people, and professes their doctrines; viz. that "Faith without works is the sole condition of salvation; that there is no necessity of works—that the immediate impulse of the Spirit is to be waited for."—Therefore, I, D. Durell, by virtue of my Visitatorial power, and with the advice and opinion of each and every one of my assessors, the reverend persons aforementioned, do expel the said Erasmus Middleton from the said Hall, and hereby pronounce him also expelled.

V. It having also appeared to me that Benjamin Kay of the said Hall, by his own confession, had frequented illicit conventicles in a private house in this town, where he had heard extempore prayers frequently offered up by one Hewett, a staymaker. Moreover, it having been proved by sufficient evidence that he held

Methodistical principles, viz, "the doctrine of absolute election; that the Spirit of God works irresistibly; that once a child of God, always a child of God," that he had endeavored to instill the same principles into others, and exhorted them to continue stedfastly in them against all opposition. Therefore, I, D. Durell, by virtue of my Visitatorial power, and with the advice and opinion of each and every one of my assessors, the reverend persons before mentioned, do expel the said Benjamin Kay from the said Hall, and hereby pronounce him also expelled.

VI. It having also appeared to me that Thomas Grove of St. Edmund-Hall, aforesaid, though not in holy orders, had by his own confession, lately preached to an assembly of people called Methodist in a barn, and had offered up extempore prayers in that congregation.—Therefore, I, D. Durell, by virtue of my Visitatorial power, and with the advice and opinion of each and every one of my assessors, the reverend persons before named, do expel the said Thomas Grove from the said Hall, and hereby pronounce him expelled.⁸⁷

It will be of interest at this juncture to compare the treatment of these six Methodist students with that of Mr. Welling, a young man who was far from being a Methodist. Of the characters of the expelled young men the principal of their Hall, Dr. Dixon, declared to the court and to Mr. Hill personally, "that he never remembers in his own or any other college six youths whose lives were so exemplary, and who behaved themselves in a more humble, regular, peaceable manner."⁸⁸ In contrast to this Mr. Welling was accused of drunkenness and blasphemy. The offense occurred on June 24, 1767, but formal charges were not filed till March 12, 1768,⁸⁹ the day following the expulsion of the six students. His recantation was not made until May 9; nearly a month after the attack by Whitefield. Probably the matter cannot be outlined more clearly than by giving in full Mr. Welling's recantation. It is as follows:

Whereas, it hath been alleged upon oath before the Reverend the Vice-Chancellor, against me, John Welling, that on the 24th of June, 1767, in conversation with Mr. Wright and Mr. Middleton of

⁸⁷Nowell's Answer, pp. 28ff.

⁸⁸Pietas Oxoniensis, Dedication, p. 5.

⁸⁹Nowell's Answer, pp. 57, 59.

Edmund Hall in this University, I made use of certain expressions tending to disparage the truth of revelation, and in particular the miracles of Moses; I do hereby declare my unfeigned assent to, and belief of, divine revelation in general, and of the miracles wrought by Moses in particular: and I do aver that I was intoxicated in liquor (for which very criminal excess I am most sincerely sorry) when I uttered those expressions; and, whereas, by the use of those expressions I have given but too just occasion of scandal and offense to the Vice-Chancellor and Members of this University: I do hereby ask pardon of them for the same, and I do further most solemnly protest that, however unguarded I may have been in the use of those, or any expressions whatsoever concerning religion, they were not declarative of my real principles, inasmuch as those principles are and ever have been, and I trust will ever continue to be, diametrically opposite to skepticism and infidelity, which from my heart I detest and abhor.

Witness my hand,
JOHN WELLING.

Sworn before me the Ninth
day of May, 1768.
D. DURELL, Vice-Chancellor.

We whose names are underwritten do certify that John Welling read the above declaration publicly in congregation, this tenth day of May, 1768.

D. DURELL, Vice-Chancellor.
E. WHITMORE, Junior Proctor.
B. WHEELER, Senior Proctor.⁹⁰

Upon this expression of concern for his misconduct Mr. Welling was not only allowed to pursue his course, but shortly after was recommended for orders.⁹¹ The Methodist students expressed concern also for their misconduct,⁹² and some pleaded for readmission, but this was denied to them all.⁹³

Mr. Sidney is of the opinion that there can be no question that these young men had in some degree deviated from the course prescribed by the statutes of the university, but he thinks that at the utmost a reprimand from their superiors would have been

⁹⁰Nowell's Answer, p. 62.

⁹¹Goliath Slain, p. 32.

⁹²Ibid., p. 31.

⁹³Nowell's Answer, p. 67.

punishment sufficiently severe.⁹⁴ It seems clear from the articles of the Church of England that to take upon themselves any of the functions of a clergyman without ordination was strictly forbidden.⁹⁵ This they unquestionably violated. However, to enter into the legal discussion of the matter doubtless would be to open an endless controversy. Opinions differed in 1768, and may differ still. Therefore the legal aspect is left for church lawyers to unravel.

Tyerman, however, suggests that in singing, reading the Scriptures, and praying in private houses they were not alone, for "Dr. Stillingfleet, Fellow of Merton College, and afterward Prebendary of Worcester; Mr. Foster, of Queen's College; Mr. Pugh, of Hertford College; Mr. Gordon, of Magdalene; Mr. Clark, of St. John's, and Mr. Hallward, of Worcester College, had done just the same."⁹⁶ In 1736 Whitefield speaks of "exhorting and teaching the prisoners and poor people at their private houses while at the university."⁹⁷ Indeed, it is a well-known fact that this was the custom of the first "Methodists" while at Oxford. And to some extent at least it had been a custom of long standing, for Mr. Samuel Wesley, father of John and Charles, did the same.^{97'}

Again, Mr. Hill asserts that literary deficiency could not be attributed to them all. For he says, "Mr. Middleton passed his examination honorably, and offered to produce copies of all his college exercises," and that "Mr. Kay must be acknowledged by his most bitter enemies to be well skilled in academic learning." He also asks, "Can their tutor deny that they made considerable progress in their learning since they entered at the Hall?"⁹⁸ To all this Dr. Nowell makes a positive, but general reply, saying that their tutor "can and did deny it; this was a part of his

⁹⁴Edwin Sidney, *Life of Sir Richard Hill*, p. 105.

⁹⁵See Article 23.

⁹⁶Tyerman, *Life of Whitefield*, vol. ii, p. 544; see also *Life of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. i, p. 421.

⁹⁷Whitefield, *Works*, Letter to Mr. H., June 30, 1736.

^{97'}John Whitehead, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 260.

⁹⁸*Pietas Oxoniensis*, p. 29.

charge against them, and their examination showed that they had made no such progress." He also affirms that their examination was very easy.⁹⁹

Mr. Hill further affirms, and he produces statements from the daily press to the same effect, that "Dr. Dixon, their principal, observed to Mr. Vice-Chancellor that, if others were questioned concerning their knowledge in the learned languages it would appear that very many were equally, if not more deficient than any of the six expelled gentlemen. . . . If the tutor himself will please recollect, he will find that he now has, and at the very same period had, a certain illiterate pupil, . . . which pupil, he desired might be admitted a member of the Hall, when between thirty and forty years old, that he might just keep his terms, and get into orders."¹⁰⁰ . . . That "Mr. Higson had introduced two or three other pupils of the same stamp, particularly one Mr. —, who though he had been at a public school, and is now more than four years standing in the University, is equally deficient in the learned languages with any of the young men, who were expelled; seldom if ever, attends the tutor's lectures." . . . That "Mr. B——t was another of Mr. Higson's pupils, whom he himself, brought to the Hall before Dr. Dixon was principal; and often boasted that he taught him the first rudiments of grammar at the university."¹⁰¹ To this Dr. Nowell makes the simple reply, "I hope not," and adds that, if it be true, charges should have been made, and the vice-chancellor doubtless would have heard them.¹⁰² But to the accusation, however, he makes no positive denial.

Furthermore, Whitefield declares that "it is notorious and obvious to all intelligent persons that the grand cause of these young men's expulsion was this, namely, that they were either real or reputed Methodists."¹⁰³ A "Gentleman of the Univer-

⁹⁹Nowell's Answer, p. 52.

¹⁰⁰Goliath Slain, p. 193; Pietas Oxoniensis, p. 30.

¹⁰¹Pietas Oxoniensis, p. 30, footnote.

¹⁰²Nowell's Answer, p. 53.

¹⁰³Letter to Dr. Durell, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. cclvii.

sity," who wrote in defense of the action of the vice-chancellor, says: "The propagation of their tenets alone would have been sufficient cause for expulsion."¹⁰⁴ . . . "The reason given was very unsatisfactory, as the want of learning in the expelled members was, at most, but a secondary cause of their expulsion."¹⁰⁵ George Birkbeck Hill, D.L.C., of Pembroke College, Oxford, writing in 1889 of the event, says, "Nominally they were expelled for their ignorance; in reality for their active Methodism."¹⁰⁶ But even nominally they were not all expelled for ignorance. In the Articles of Accusation by their tutor destitution of knowledge in the learned languages was not alleged against Benjamin Kay or Thomas Grove. In the Articles of Expulsion by the vice-chancellor destitution of learning was not alleged against Benjamin Kay, Thomas Jones, or Erasmus Middleton. Undoubtedly they were expelled primarily because they were Methodists. This view was held by all their friends. It was voiced to some extent at least, and quite strongly through the public press. It is confirmed by suggestions from the principal of the Hall, Dr. Dixon; by the statements and omissions in the Articles of Accusation and Expulsion, and also acknowledged by "A Gentleman of the University," who wrote in its defense. Dr. Nowell seemed pleased that the Methodists' "views of filling the church with their votaries have by this seasonable interposition been disappointed, and the plan, which they have for some time been laboring to accomplish, is at present disconcerted at least, if not entirely defeated."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴A Vindication of Proceedings, 1st edition, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵A Vindication of Proceedings, 2d edition, Appendix, p. 34.

¹⁰⁶G. B. Hill Edition Boswell's Life of Samuel Johnson, vol. ii, p. 214.

¹⁰⁷Nowell's Answer, Preface, p. 1.

NOTE—In August, 1768, Lady Huntingdon opened her school at Trevecka. Among those who entered was Mr. Shipman. Two years later he died of consumption, which he contracted while he was preaching. (Methodist Magazine, 1788, p. 515; Sidney, Life of Richard Hill, pp. 523ff.)

Mr. Matthews was also admitted to Lady Huntingdon's college at Trevecka. (Life of Countess of Huntingdon, vol. i, p. 425, footnote.)

After his expulsion Mr. Jones was much noticed by Lady Huntingdon; was ordained; became curate of Clifton, near Birmingham; married the

On March 15, 1769, Joseph Benson entered his name at the University of Oxford. From that time he regularly remained at Saint Edmund Hall, and was "conscientiously attentive to the studies and obligations of his situation."¹⁰⁸ It was his intention to continue at Oxford till he should graduate, but was discouraged by the opposition of his tutor, to whom he confessed his connection with Lady Huntingdon and with Wesley, together with some irregularities which these connections occasioned.¹⁰⁹ While classical master at the Kingswood School, in 1768, it was his custom to hold meetings among the colliers, to exhort them and to pray with them. Also while tutoring at Lady Huntingdon's school at Trevecka, in 1770, probably during vacations at Oxford, he was accustomed to go out into the village on Sundays and preach to the poor and ignorant inhabitants. His tutor, Mr. Bowerbank, informed him that on these accounts he would never sign his testimonials for orders. He also refused to act any longer in the capacity of tutor to him, and this he refused to do even though Mr. Benson should agree for the future to omit everything of this kind, and to reside wholly at the university. This he could have done at that time, as he was no longer connected with either Lady Huntingdon or with Wesley. However, he was obliged to leave the university.¹¹⁰

Mr. Benson continued to seek admission to the church. He succeeded in getting testimonials from a beneficed clergyman in Wales, but he was refused ordination by the bishop because of a lack of a college degree. Nothing remained for him then but to

sister of Cowper's friend, the Lady Austin, and died rather suddenly at a good old age. (Ibid.)

Mr. Middleton was supported at Cambridge by Mr. Fuller, the banker, a dissenter, and ordained in Ireland by a bishop of Down. In Scotland he married into a branch of the ducal family of Gordon. In London he was made curate to Romaine and Cadogan. There he wrote his *Biographia Evangelica*, an octavo publication of four volumes, containing more than two thousand pages, published in 1816. (Ibid.)

¹⁰⁸ James MacDonald, *Memoirs of Jos. Benson*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 24.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 25.

return to the Methodists, which he did,¹¹¹ and became one of Wesley's able supporters.

The *Arminian Magazine* gives an account of the experience of Robert Roe at Oxford. He appears to have completed the entire course and in 1777 to have passed his college examination "cum laude," but was denied advancement to the university examinations, and to the degree. He was told that his advancement was about to be offered, but some persons objected to it; "not that they objected to your morals, or your conduct, for these are unquestionable, but you attend illicit conventicles." When he denied this, saying that the meetings were legalized, the principal replied, "What comes to the same in our eyes is that you have, and do frequent the meetings of the people called Methodists." This he acknowledged, but denied that he ever preached, expounded, or prayed. They refused also to give him an honorable dismissal, or a transfer to another college, or even a written statement of the fact that it was merely because he attended the meetings of the Methodists that they had dealt thus with him. They feared lest he should use it as a means to enter another college, which he very much wished to do.

The young man was quite persistent in his efforts to persuade the instructors to permit his advancement, but without success. His father, who was unfriendly to the Methodists, also persisted. He went to Oxford, then wrote a letter in which he said "that they will hear of nothing; that subscribing to the Articles, Homilies, or Discipline" would not satisfy, unless the young man "go and reside there three years and forsake the Methodists." Both of which he refused to do, and consequently never received a degree.¹¹²

In 1781 Wesley spoke of the expulsion of the six students, and mentions a Mr. Seagar as having been refused the liberty of entering the university. These circumstances, he said, had forced him to see that neither he nor any of his friends need

¹¹¹James MacDonald, *Memoirs of Joseph Benson*, p. 27.

¹¹²*Methodist Magazine*, 1784, pp. 134ff.

expect either favor or justice there.¹¹³ And the old man turned sorrowfully away from the institution which he had so fondly loved, and which he had so often visited during his long and busy career. Henceforth his affections appear to have been transferred to his own school at Kingswood. And Methodists seem entirely to have disappeared from Oxford, which had been so dear to all its founders, and was the cradle of its origin.

¹¹³John Wesley, Works, Plain Account of Kingswood School, par. 16.

CHAPTER XII

THE METHODISTS VILIFIED

JOHN RICHARD GREEN says a "savage ferocity . . . characterized political controversy in the England of the Revolution and the Georges. Never has the strife of warring parties been carried on with so utter an absence of truth or fairness; never has the language of political opponents stooped to such depths of coarseness and scurrility. From the age of Bolingbroke to the age of Burke the gravest statesmen were not ashamed to revile one another with invective only worthy of the fish-market. And outside of the legislature the tone of attack was even more brutal. Grub-street ransacked the whole vocabulary of abuse to find epithets for Walpole. Gay, amid general applause, set the statesmen of his day on the public stage in the guise of highwaymen and pickpockets. 'It is difficult to determine,' said the witty playwright, 'whether the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen.'" ¹

The same spirit entered into the writings of the pamphleteers and publishers who took up the pen against the Methodists. Almost every imaginable form of abuse was heaped upon Wesley and his colaborers. Men who held the highest stations within the gift of the church were guilty of publishing rumors upon hearsay evidence, when the facts in the case could have been discovered, had a proper sense of fairness prompted them to make the effort. Methodism was not hidden. Its meeting places were well known. A careful opponent either would have gone himself, or sent a substitute, to determine the truth of the rumor before publishing it. Also, statements were made even by bishops upon the authority of a second person, and without even so much as consulting the person concerned. And these statements were

¹J. R. Green, *History of the English People*, vol. iv, p. 120, or p. 115.

published in pamphlets to be distributed over the three kingdoms, to work whatever mischief they might.

Moreover, had the Methodists been guilty of one half of the outrages, corruption, and crimes of which they were accused, it would have been very easy to rid the nation of them. Sufficient evidence to convict them before the government courts should have been produced, and the hangman's rope would speedily have done the rest. For that was an age when traitors and criminals were worked off on the gallows by the dozen or by the score at a time.

In January, 1739, Whitefield took leave of his friends at Oxford and reached London, where, he says, he met with the first pamphlet published against him. This was written by a clergyman.² But the time was not far distant when there were plenty of pamphlets, as well as rumors. What time the Methodist leaders had to spare from their busy lives was consumed in answering accusations and arguments. Southey says, "The strangest suspicions and calumnies were circulated; and men will believe any calumnies, however preposterously absurd, against those of whom they are disposed to think ill."³

John Wesley, being the leader of this movement, naturally suspicions and calumnies centered about him. In August, 1739, he spent two hours with a zealous man, laboring to convince him that he was not an enemy to the Church of England.⁴ At this time the report was current in Bristol that he was a papist, if not a Jesuit. Some said that he was born and reared in Rome.⁵ These reports became common throughout the nation, and were believed by many. He was accused of taking the Pretender with him into Cornwall under the name of John Downes. It was reported that he called himself John Wesley, whereas everybody knew that Wesley was dead.⁶ It was

²George Whitefield, *Journal*, p. 117.

³Southey, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 25.

⁴John Wesley, *Journal*, August 27, 1739.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*, April 16, 1744; above, p. 137.

asserted that he had been seen with the Pretender in France; and others said that he was in prison in London.⁷ Rumor had it that he was convicted of selling gin and fined twenty pounds; besides, he kept two popish priests in his house. One man said he had heard, "That it was beyond dispute, Mr. Wesley had large remittances from Spain, in order to make a party among the poor; and as soon as the Spaniards landed he was to join them with twenty thousand men."⁸ At the time of the insurrection, in Scotland, 1745, it was asserted that he was then with the Pretender in Edinburgh.⁹ Another said he would make affidavit that "he himself saw" John Wesley "administer extreme unction to a woman, and give her a wafer, and say, that was her passport to heaven."¹⁰ After the failure of the last effort of the Pretender to gain the English throne, these reports were less credited, but the idea of popery was kept before the public mind by pamphlets and comparisons till the time of Wesley's death.

He was also declared to be a deceiver of the people. A woman was accused of robbing her master of three hundred pounds, and was threatened to be put in irons unless she would confess that she had given the money to Wesley. The money was afterward found where the master himself had left it.¹¹ Bishop Lavington accused him in print, upon the alleged statement of a Mrs. Morgan at Mitchell, of having made indecent proposals to her maid. In the presence of Mr. Trembath and Mr. Haime, the woman denied to Wesley that she had ever made any such statement.¹² Wesley, however, was "not sure that she had not said just the contrary to others."¹³ Thereupon the Bishop furnished his witnesses to prove that Mrs. Morgan had made the statement which he had published. But he seemed

⁷John Wesley, *Journal*, April 7, 1744.

⁸*Ibid.*, August 26, 1741.

⁹*Ibid.*, November, 1745.

¹⁰Charles Wesley, *Journal*, April 5, 1745.

¹¹*Ibid.*, May 8, 1740; October 8, 1740.

¹²Bishop of Exeter, Answer to John Wesley's Late Letter; John Wesley, *Works*, Letter to Author of Methodism and Papists compared.

¹³John Wesley, *Journal*, August 25, 1750.

to have felt no obligation whatever to prove the fact of his accusation. The maid concerned seems not to have been questioned at all about the matter.

He was accused of extorting one hundred pounds from his society.¹⁴ At Athlone, Ireland, it was reported that he had run away with another man's wife.¹⁵ At Brandon a gentlewoman informed him that Dr. B. had averred to her and to many others, 1, "that both John and Charles Wesley had been expelled from the University of Oxford long ago; 2, That there was not a Methodist left in Dublin; all the rest having been rooted out by order of government; 3, That neither were there any Methodists left in England; and 4, That it was all Jesuitism at the bottom."¹⁶

Unhappily and unfortunately, Methodism soon divided into two sections, Arminian and Calvinistic. So long as Whitefield lived, friendship and cooperation were maintained. But shortly after his death, in 1770, a most deplorable controversy arose, led on the Calvinistic side by two young men, the Rev. Augustus Toplady and the Rev. Rowland Hill. The Methodists emphasized the necessity of the new birth, or the transferring, so far as possible, over into life and conduct of the principles and character of the Christ. That one of this faith should imbibe a spirit of bitterness and rancor is quite incomprehensible. Yet Mr. Toplady seemed to have drunk quite deeply of this uncharitable fountain. The following was from a young man concerning another whose age at least should have commanded respect: "What shall we say of a man who first hatches blasphemy, and then fathers it on others? Nay, who adds crime to crime by indirectly persisting in the falsehood even after the falsehood has been detected and publicly exposed?" . . . He "writes a known, willful, palpable lie to the public."¹⁷ "Either he is absolutely unacquainted with the first principles of reasoning, or he offers

¹⁴John Wesley, Journal, July 13, 1747.

¹⁵Charles Wesley, Journal, September 1, 1748.

¹⁶John Wesley, Journal, June 2, 1749.

¹⁷Toplady, More Work for Mr. John Wesley, pp. 7ff., Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. ccx.

up the knowledge he has as an whole burnt sacrifice on the altar of malice, calumny, and falsehood.”¹⁸ “No man in the world is more prone to put things in people’s mouths, which they never said or thought of than John Wesley. . . . But ’tis more probable that ’twas forged and dressed up for the occasion.”¹⁹

Charles Wesley was not a great organizer as was his brother, nor so great a preacher as either his brother or Whitefield. Moreover, he seems not to have participated in the numerous controversies in which the Methodists were engaged. He was the great hymn writer of the trio, and this attracted less attention and less opposition than the theology that they preached. Therefore, while he was reviled, he seems to have escaped those bitter personal invectives, which were so commonly heaped upon his brother and upon Whitefield. Usually, the accusations against which he had to contend were those which were heaped upon the Methodists in general, rather than against personal abuse.

Whitefield was more unfortunate than either of the Wesleys. He began his ministry when very young. He was ordained when a little past twenty-one, and was a well-known evangelist at twenty-five.²⁰ At Oxford he had been a servitor, which of necessity took time from his studies. Hence he had neither the experience nor the learning of the Wesleys. He was, moreover, less judicious than his friends. He made statements which gave to his opponents the opportunity upon which they most vigorously seized. With maturer years he saw his errors, acknowledged his fault, and offered apologies. At this his opponents called him a self-confessed hypocrite. It was, in fact, but the promptings of a generous and honest nature. Moreover, he attracted the masses as no other preacher in England, which aroused jealousies. Besides, he was a great actor preacher.²¹ Therefore he could be mimicked. Being a generous and sensitive

¹⁸Toplady, *More Work for Mr. John Wesley*, p. 24.

¹⁹Toplady, *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophic Necessity Asserted*, p. 147, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. clxxxviii.

²⁰Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield*, vol. i, p. 45.

²¹Southey, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 152.

nature, he doubtless suffered keenly from the scurrility and misrepresentations heaped upon him. However, he persisted unflaggingly in his work, and not without rewards, for he had many friends, as well as enemies. Only a few references will be necessary to show the nature of this published opposition.

In 1744 there was published a pamphlet entitled *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, Occasioned by his Pretended Answer to the . . . Observations . . . on the Methodists, By a Gentleman of Pembroke-College, Oxford.*²² This is a rude, personal attack, and is of no interest except as it reveals the rancor even of a college man. In it are such remarks as the following: "Your letter is stuffed with the coaxing and wheedling of the woman, the daring of the rebel, the pertness of the coxcomb, the evasions of the Jesuit, and the bitter maliciousness of the bigot."²³ . . . "You can coax with all the sincerity too of the woman, whilst spleen and rancor lurk in your heart; that you are crafty and malicious enough to be suspected of any wicked enterprise."²⁴

In 1760 Whitefield says, "I am now mimicked and burlesqued upon the public stage."²⁵ And, indeed, he was, as the following will show. Owing to an illness in his childhood, one eye was squinted.²⁶ From this his revilers often called him Dr. Squintum. Under this name he was introduced upon the stage.

Samuel Foote is said to have possessed a wonderful faculty for mimicry. He could imitate even the vocal intonations of his subject.²⁷ Of this faculty Dr. Samuel Johnson says: "It is not a talent, it is a vice; it is what others abstain from. It is not comedy which exhibits the character of a species, as that of a miser gathering from many miners; it is farce, which exhibits individuals."²⁸ This vice, as Dr. Johnson called it, was Foote's making, and finally his undoing.

²²Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. clxvi.

²³Letter to Whitefield, p. 1; Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. clxvi.

²⁴Ibid., p. 19

²⁵George Whitefield Works, Letter, August 15, 1760.

²⁶Tyerman, Life of George Whitefield, vol. i, p. 51.

²⁷Life of Countess of Huntingdon, vol. i, p. 208, note.

²⁸Boswell's Life of Samuel Johnson, vol. i, p. 373.

In 1760 Mr. Foote produced a play entitled "The Minor: A Comedy." It was acted in the New Theater in the Hay-Market. It is said also to have been acted at Garrick's Theater at Drury Lane. Of this play Foote was both author and actor of the leading parts.²⁹

This is a shameless production in three acts. There are frequent lewd and indecent insinuations with reference to the Methodists. According to the plot, during an illness the fictitious character Mrs. Cole, or old Moll, as she was familiarly called, had her doubts and waverings. One summer she went to Boulogne to repent, but the monks there would not give her absolution unless she quit her business. She then met Mr. Squintum (Whitefield), who, she says, "stepped in with his saving grace and got me with the new birth, and I became, as you see, regenerate and another creature."³⁰

Mrs. Cole appears as the mistress of a house of shame. She told a young man, Sir George by name, that she had advertised in "the register office for servants under seventeen"; and, she says, "ten to one I will light on something that will do."³¹

A titled father, because his daughter refused to marry according to his will, drove her from his home. The girl found a new home, adopted the tenets of her benefactress, and attended the Methodist meetings with her. Here she observed Mrs. Cole and admired her because of her seeming religious devotion. Mrs. Cole took the young girl to her home, and when fully under her power, the girl discovers the awful truth. One morning she was told that either she must go with her mistress or go to gaol. She decides to trust herself to the tender mercies of a gentleman libertine rather than to the gaols.³² Mrs. Cole then took her to Sir George with these words: "Come along, Lucy. . . . I thought I had silenced your scruples. Don't you remember what Mr.

²⁹Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield*, vol. ii, p. 430.

³⁰Samuel Foote, *The Minor*, pp. 45ff.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 44.

³²*Ibid.*, pp. 78ff.

NOTE—The English prisons at this time were hopeless dens of vice.

Squintum said? A woman's not worth saving that won't be guilty of a swinging sin; for then they have matter to repent upon."³³ The girl went and begged for mercy from the young man, who, "touched with her story, truth, and tears, was converted from her spoiler to the protector of her innocence."³⁴ The Methodist was relentless. The libertine had pity.

It is surprising that this disgraceful play could have been acted on the stage in England for ten years. For it is a well-known fact that the Methodists promptly excluded from their societies all unworthy members. It is to the credit of Edinburgh that the piece so shocked the people that, after the first night, only ten women had the boldness to witness such impurity, and that, after the death of Whitefield was announced, public sentiment exerted itself sufficiently to drive the piece from the play-house.³⁵

In the meantime Israel Pottinger had produced another play entitled "The Methodist: A Comedy; Being a Continuation and Completion of The Minor."³⁶ This "was intended to have been acted at the Theater Royal at Covent-Garden, but for obvious reasons was suppressed."³⁷ Tyerman says that notwithstanding it was not allowed on the stage, it soon passed through three editions as a publication.³⁸

In this play Mrs. Cole laments it as an unhappy providence that her victim had escaped her. Lucy is about to be married. In order to prevent this and to get her again in their power,

³³Samuel Foote, *The Minor*, p. 74.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 87.

³⁵Gillies, *Memoirs of George Whitefield*, p. 233, note.

³⁶NOTE—The title page of this play is ambiguous (see note below), and at first glance seems to credit Foote with the authorship, but the play was printed for Pottinger, and the burden of proof indicates that he was the author.

³⁷NOTE—The complete title is as follows:

"The METHODIST: A COMEDY; Being a Continuation and Completion of the Plan of The MINOR, Written by Mr. Foote, As it was intended to have been Acted at the Theatre Royal in Covent-Garden, but for obvious reasons suppressed. With the original Prologue and Epilogue."

³⁸Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield*, vol. ii, p. 438.

and perhaps back to their religion, Mrs. Cole and Mr. Squintum plot to circulate the report that while at Mrs. Cole's house she had sinned, and that her plea of innocence was false. They all but succeed, but through an inmate their wicked scheme is thwarted.

Enough of these unsavory plays. It is refreshing to know that some of the periodicals of the day sternly rebuked these authors and vigorously denounced their productions.³⁹

Together with their leaders the Methodists as a body were the objects of ridicule, invectives, buffoonery, slander, and calumny. False rumors were reported, cartoons and hideous portraits were published; and pamphlets, plays, and dialogues were written against them.⁴⁰ Some were moderate, while others were vicious and slanderous. Some writers seemed to think that their case was strengthened by the use of abusive and vulgar epithets. Charles Wesley says, "Innumerable stories are invented to stop the work, or, rather, repeated, for they are the same we have heard a thousand times, as well as the primitive Christians—all manner of wickedness is acted in our societies, except the eating of little children."⁴¹ So common was the report that vice was practiced at their society meetings that at times unmarried women scarcely dared to be accompanied home at night by male friends, and widowers sometimes refused to employ housekeepers to care for their motherless children.⁴²

This pamphlet opposition, these rumors, and this scurrility continued during the entire life of Wesley. Sometimes one story was most prominent; sometimes another, but always bitter invective. It also was general. Mr. Shadford says, "Wherever I traveled I found the Methodists everywhere spoken against by

³⁹Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield*, vol. ii, pp. 430ff.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 435, note.

⁴¹Charles Wesley, *Journal*, September 5, 1748.

⁴²NOTE—After the death of his wife in order "to avoid all occasion of slander with which the Methodists were plentifully bespattered," Mr. Greene, of Rotherham, sent his children to be cared for in other homes, thus intensifying his loneliness, that he might keep no woman in his house. (James Everett, *Wesleyan Methodism in Sheffield*, p. 82.)

wicked and ungodly persons of every denomination";⁴³ and Wesley says the same.⁴⁴ Moreover, there were great numbers of these publications. The Rev. Richard Green prepared a book which was published in 1902, entitled *Anti-Methodist Publications, Issued During the Eighteenth Century*. This is a "bibliography of all known books and pamphlets written in opposition to the Methodist revival during the life of Wesley; together with an account of replies to them, and of some other publications." The book contains one hundred and fifty-seven pages, and mentions no less than six hundred and six different headings many of which mention both the publication and its answer or answers.⁴⁵

This press opposition began by an anonymous letter in Fogg's *Weekly Journal* in 1732, which is believed to be the first mention of the Methodists in the public periodicals. The letter was occasioned by the death of Mr. Morgan, one of the Oxford group. Like so many later writings, it grossly misrepresented the Methodists. "All Wednesdays and Fridays are strictly to be kept as fasts, and blood let once a fortnight to keep down the carnal man. . . . In short, they practice everything contrary to the judgment of other persons." Tyerman says, "The entire letter is before us; but only a part of it is quoted, first, because there is a great amount of empty and ungrammatical verbiage unworthy of being admitted into what was, at that period, perhaps the most literary and respectable paper published—Fogg's *Weekly Journal*; and, secondly, because there is one paragraph, which, despite its verbosity, is so loathsomely impure, that it would be a sin against both God and man to reproduce it."⁴⁶ Within two months this pamphlet was answered, then there followed a lull till 1738, when it began again, and soon became more violent and scurrilous. From this date every year, except 1783, till Wesley's death, brought forth one or more, sometimes

⁴³Jackson's *Lives*, vol. vi, p. 151.

⁴⁴John Wesley, *Journal*, October 15, 1739.

⁴⁵NOTE—The book gives only the titles of the publications, and occasionally a very brief comment.

⁴⁶Tyerman, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, pp. 85ff.

many, publications, either in behalf of the Methodists or against them.⁴⁷ Because of the number of these productions the impossibility of doing justice to the subject in this chapter is readily seen. It will be necessary, therefore, to limit the notice to only a very few of them.

In 1739 the following harsh words were printed in *The Scots Magazine*: "Let not such bold movers of sedition, and ringleaders of the rabble, to the disgrace of their order, be regularly admitted into those pulpits which they have taken with multitude and with tumult, or as ignominiously by stealth."

The same year the clergy began to write. Several sermons were published by them, in one of which the Methodists were spoken of as "restless deceivers of the people, who make it their daily business to fill the heads of the ignorant and unwary with wild, perplexive notions." Another "brands the Methodists as 'deceivers,' 'babblers,' 'insolent pretenders,' 'men of capricious humors, spiritual sleights, and canting craftiness,' 'novices in divinity,' casting 'indecent, false and unchristian reflections on the clergy,' 'newfangled teachers, setting up their own fantastic conceits in opposition to the authority of God, and so bigoted to their wild opinions, and so puffed up with pride and vanity at the success of their enthusiastic labors, that they all appear fully disposed to maintain and defend their cause by more than spiritual weapons, or to die martyrs for it.'" ⁴⁸

This year witnessed what is perhaps the beginning of poetical opposition. There is mention of a publication which appeared at this time entitled "The Methodist: A Burlesque Poem."⁴⁹ Some of these so-called poetical works were vulgar in the extreme, as we shall see later.

The next year a new and, for men so deeply religious, a rather curious accusation was brought against them. Wesley, as was his custom, had been visiting a condemned soldier in his cell. But, he says, "the next day I was informed that the com-

⁴⁷R. Green, *Anti-Methodist Publications*.

⁴⁸Tyerman, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. i, p. 239.

⁴⁹*Gentleman's Magazine*, 1739, p. 276.

manding officer had given strict orders, 'Neither Mr. Wesley nor any of his people should be admitted. For they were all atheists.'"⁵⁰

The Rev. William Bowman, M.A., gave to the public this year a pamphlet entitled *The Imposture of Methodism Displayed*, the aim of which, he says, "has been truth, and the real interest of undefiled Religion, the Honor of God, and service of Mankind."⁵¹ He describes Methodism as "An enthusiasm, patched and made up of a thousand incoherencies and absurdities, picked and collected together from the vilest heresy upon earth; an enthusiasm as whimsical as irrational, rashly taken up, supported by faction, and propagated by the most horrid arts of lying and hypocrisy."⁵² Speaking of their being denied the use of the churches, he says: "This was not done, till by their extravagant flights and buffooneries they had made the church more like a bear-garden than the house of God, and the rostrum nothing else but the trumpet of sedition, heresy, blasphemy, and every thing destructive to religion and good manners."⁵³ "If haughtiness and pride be contrary to the genius of Christianity, and a turbulent, untractable spirit inconsistent with the Spirit of God, we have a fresh mark of imposture before us, and a proper caveat against those ravening wolves that come to us in sheep's clothing."⁵⁴ Relative to their class meetings, he says: "What can we think of their nocturnal assemblies? . . . I pretend not to know what is transacted in these meetings, but I cannot help suspecting that associations of this sort are seldom entered into merely upon a religious account, but generally for contrary ends and purposes. When I reflect upon the monstrous society of Bacchanals in the grove of Stimula, which in the 567th year of Rome was suppressed by Postumius Albinus, I am apt to make ungrateful comparisons."⁵⁵ Herein is that base insinuation of

⁵⁰John Wesley, *Journal*, March 29, 1740.

⁵¹Wm. Bowman, *Imposture of Methodism Displayed*, p. 83.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 79.

immorality, which followed the Methodists so long, and made their lot so exceedingly hard.

Another pamphlet appeared at this time which, speaking of Methodism, says: "The most unchristian malice, lying, slander, railing, and cursing, are, it seems, the criterions of modern saintship. Let my soul be among the heathen philosophers rather than among these saints. . . . But these Methodists, those especially who are clergymen themselves, accuse falsely; accuse falsely their brethren of the clergy, whom 'tis plain they mortally hate, and would, if it were in their power, exterminate from the earth. Let any one of the least discernment judge whether the papists and infidels be not firm and faithful allies of these enthusiasts."⁵⁶ This whole pamphlet is the work of an excited and angry man. It abounds with such expressions as "rudeness and ill manners," "pride and insolence," "spite and malice," "misrepresentations, misquotations," "lying and slander," etc.

In 1741 Charles Wesley was told that "you occasion the increase of our poor."⁵⁷ Indeed, this was another rather common report. It is frequently met. The argument was something to the effect that the Methodists did little but go to meeting, pray, etc., to the neglect of their families. Hence the preachers were malicious teachers. To this accusation Wesley replied: "Sir, you are misinformed; the reverse of that is true. None of our society is chargeable to you. Even those who were so before they heard us, or who spent all their wages at the alehouse, now never go there at all, but keep their money to maintain their families, and have to give to those that want."⁵⁸ In 1744 a Mr. H—— vehemently declaimed to John Wesley "against the new sect as enemies of the church, Jacobites, papists, and what not."⁵⁹

In 1745 Lady Huntingdon was attacked and accused of favoring the Pretender. These aspersions tended to aggravate

⁵⁶Anon, *The True Spirit of the Methodists*, p. 33, Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. cxcix.

⁵⁷Charles Wesley, *Journal*, September 22, 1741.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹John Wesley, *Journal*, April 11, 1744.

the increasing obloquy under which her Ladyship and those whom she patronized were now laboring. But she paid little attention to these malicious reports until several of the itinerants under her auspices were beaten and illtreated. Some of the neighboring magistrates refused to act in behalf of the Methodists, when their persons and property were attacked, and her Ladyship was forced to apply to higher authority. She addressed a remonstrance to Lord Carteret, one of his Majesty's principal secretaries of state." Lord Carteret's reply to Lady Huntingdon's communication was dated November 19, 1745, only a few days before his going out of office. It was as follows:

"MADAM: I laid your remonstrance before his Majesty, the King. My Royal Master commands me to assure your Ladyship that, as the father and protector of his people, he will suffer no persecution on account of religion; and I am desired to inform all magistrates to afford protection and countenance to such persons as may require to be protected in the conscientious discharge of their religious observances.

"His Majesty is fully sensible of your Ladyship's attachment to the House of Hanover; and has directed me to assure your Ladyship of his most gracious favor and kindest wishes. I have the honor to be, Madam, your Ladyship's most obedient humble servant,
"CARTERET."⁶⁰

In the Gentleman's Magazine for 1747 there was printed an article under the heading, "Hypocrisy of a Methodist Detected." It says, "There has been for some years past a considerable number of Methodists in this city, who were at first collected and since have continued under the guidance of Mr. — as their minister." It further relates the wretched conduct of this minister, his criminal relation with some of the women among his followers, his defense of polygamy, when his wickedness was discovered, and the final abandonment of his flock, and of his devoted and virtuous wife.⁶¹ The city mentioned was Salisbury, and the minister was Mr. Westley Hall, who had married Martha, the sister of John and Charles Wesley.⁶² The account of this

⁶⁰Life of Countess of Huntingdon, vol. i, pp. 67ff.

⁶¹Gentleman's Magazine, 1747, p. 531.

⁶²Ibid.; John Wesley, Journal, July 20, 1746.

wretched man is doubtless all too true. The injury lay in loading the infamy upon the Methodists, for at this time Mr. Hall had no connection with them.⁶³

Mr. Hall had been one of the Oxford Methodists, and had been associated with the Wesleys at the beginning of their work.⁶⁴ However, he had never been a preacher under the Wesleys. On the other hand, he had been a minister in the Established Church with Methodistical principles.⁶⁵ But six years previous to the discovery of his moral bankruptcy he had broken with the Establishment, and for four years he had had nothing whatever to do with the Wesleys.⁶⁶ He had become an independent, dissenting minister. His tenets had become such that even his wife, who was a very brilliant woman as well as a beautiful character, endowed mentally somewhat like her brother John, had refused to join with him in his society.⁶⁷ He had always been unstable, but had not broken out in open profligacy so long as he was in any way under the influence of the Methodists. Therefore this article was a great injustice to them, and helped to intensify the falsehood, which doubtless was believed by all too many, that lewdness was practiced in the Methodist meetings. Nearly two years after this deplorable incident there was printed in the Bath Journal an open letter, probably to John Wesley, which asks why he does not publicly warn his followers against these evils, and says, "Many persons of great eminence among you have been publicly charged with the commission of these crimes." "Has not a preacher of your sect preached and printed to prove the lawfulness of polygamy?" Wesley, of course, replied: "I answer, No preacher in connection with me had ever done any such thing. What Mr. Hall, of Salisbury, has done is no more to me than it is to you, only that I am a

⁶³ John Wesley, Journal, December 1, 1747.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, January 1, 1739; December 22, 1747, Letter to W. Hall, p. 1.

⁶⁵ Charles Wesley, Journal, December 6, 1736.

⁶⁶ John Wesley, Journal, December 22, 1747, Letter to W. H., p. 8.

⁶⁷ Charles Wesley, Journal, August 11, 1743.

greater sufferer by it. For he renounced all the Methodists several years since: and, when I was at Salisbury last, turned both me and my sister out of his house. No man, therefore, of common, heathen humanity, could ever blame me for the faults of that unhappy man.”⁶⁸ It is to the credit of this magazine that in its next issue it printed a full explanation of the fact that Mr. Hall was at that time in no way connected with the Methodists.⁶⁹ However, because of the prevalence of such stories, and of public prejudice, it is quite probable that this denial did not reach nearly so many ears as did the previous accusation.

In 1749 there appeared Part I of a book entitled *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*. During the same year Part II appeared, and in 1751 Part III was published. These books were published anonymously, but were immediately supposed to have been written by the Rev. George Lavington, LL.D., Bishop of Exeter, and this soon became an acknowledged fact. They are now everywhere mentioned as the Bishop's work.

It appears that the Bishop had delivered an episcopal charge to the clergy of his diocese. An unknown wag then published what was pretended to be a manuscript copy of the Bishop's Charge, but which contained declarations of doctrine and of experience worthy of Whitefield or of Wesley. This pretended Charge was circulated, and meanwhile Bishop Lavington, the hater of the sect, was dubbed a Methodist. His anger can be imagined. He accused the Methodist leaders of committing the forgery. The Countess of Huntingdon compelled him to retract. Shortly after this the first part of the *Comparison* appeared.⁷⁰ It is a caustic attack upon Methodism in general, and especially upon Wesley and Whitefield.

The book has little merit. Had it been written with some respect for the opinions of mankind, and with a little courtesy,

⁶⁸John Wesley, Works, Answer to Letter in Bath Journal, April 17, 1748.

⁶⁹Gentleman's Magazine, December, 1747, pp. 619ff.

⁷⁰Tyerman, Life of George Whitefield, vol. ii, pp. 201ff.

it might have done some good. But because of its lack of these qualities, and of the rankling bitterness of its tone, its tendency would be to intensify hatred and strife.

The author so far lost himself in his antipathy that it apparently became impossible for him to see anything good even in the virtues of Methodism. The Methodists refused to adorn themselves with gold and costly apparel that they might have the more with which "to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to lodge the stranger, to relieve those that are sick and in prison, and to lessen the numberless afflictions to which we are exposed in this vale of tears."⁷¹ But the papists also wore homely garments. "St. Francis would always wear apparel of the vilest sort; never anything that was sumptuous; that being a distinction of grace. . . . St. Ignatius, by preaching powerfully against fine clothes made the women weep, tear their hair, and charming faces, and throw away their vain ointments."⁷² . . . Ignatius loved to appear abroad with old, dirty shoes, used no comb, let his hair clot, and would never pare his nails. A certain Jesuit was so holy that he had above a hundred and fifty patches upon his breeches, and proportionably on his other garments. Another had almost three hundred patches!"⁷³

In defense of their doctrines and methods, the Methodists always pointed to the fact that the wicked and profligate of both sexes were reformed. "And yet," says this author, "we can match them among their elder brethren. . . . 'St. Francis used to call people together with blowing a horn, (as the Methodists by advertisements) when he was to preach; and his preaching was so wonderfully moving, that prodigious multitudes of men and women, above all number and computation, and the very harlots were converted. . . . A certain Jesuit went to the Stews, and made a surprising conversion of a multitude of prostitutes.'"⁷⁴

The entire work abounds with such expressions as "that

⁷¹John Wesley, Works, Sermon on Dress, par. 14.

⁷²Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared, part i, p. 21.

⁷³Ibid., p. 22.

⁷⁴Ibid., part ii, p. 4.

collection of their own fooleries, and faults, extravagant whims, and presumptions, pretensions,"⁷⁵ etc. Wesley bursts out into an "enthusiastic rant, 'I look upon all the world as my parish.'" ⁷⁶ Whitefield is quoted as saying, "If a bishop commit a fault, I will tell him of it." This the author asserts is to "assume the dignity of a primate."⁷⁷ The Methodists rebuked the clergy. This was "gall of bitterness," and "black art of calumny."⁷⁸ And the following is addressed to the Rev. Mr. Wesley: "Wild-fire, dangerously tossed about, instead of that light which came down from heaven;—puffy pretensions to extraordinary revelations, impressions, usurping the name of the Holy One; with personal conferences with God, face to face; enthusiastic ranters, comparing themselves with prophets and apostles, if not with Christ himself;⁷⁹ the most wild and extravagant behaviour, the phrensies of a disturbed brain and deluded imagination, the effects of fits, of a weak head or diseased body, all turned into so many tests and marks of saintship; the spirit of pride and vanity, possessing the leaders; a spirit of envy, rancor, broils, and implacable animosities, dashing each other to pieces; a spirit of bitterness and uncharitableness toward the rest of mankind; progress through immorality; skepticism, infidelity, atheism, through spiritual desertions; despair and madness, made the gate of perfection. . . . hair-brained enthusiasts, and crafty impostures . . . tokens of liars."⁸⁰ And thus he runs on for nearly three pages.

A very bitter attack was made in 1750 by the Rev. John

⁷⁵Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared, part i, p. 28.

⁷⁶Ibid., part ii, p. 126.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid., part i, p. 17.

⁷⁹NOTE—In defense of field preaching Whitefield asks, Can you recollect no earlier, or more unexceptionable field preachers than the papists? What think you of Jesus Christ, and his apostles? Were they not field preachers?" To this the author replies: "And will you never leave off your inexcusable pride in comparing yourself to Christ and his apostles? Will you still persist in this presumptuous sin?" (Enthusiasm, part II, Preface, pp. 10ff.)

⁸⁰Ibid., part iii, Preface, p. 25.

Kirkby in a pamphlet entitled "The Imposter Detected; or the Counterfeit Saint Turned Inside Out. Containing a full discovery of the horrid blasphemies and impieties taught by those diabolical seducers called Methodists, under colour of the only real Christianity. Particularly intended for the use of the city of Canterbury, where that Mystery of iniquity has lately begun to work."⁸¹

This is another virulent attack, largely void of argument or reason. The author seemingly ransacked the vocabulary of the language for epithets. While he mentions no name, yet he evidently is speaking chiefly of John Wesley, for he mentions the author of the Methodists, and also speaks of a publication which was written by Wesley.⁸² The entire pamphlet of fifty-five pages abounds with such expressions as the following: "Here his familiar imp seems to have owned this wolf in sheep's clothing,"⁸³ . . . "It is no less plain that the love this counterfeit saint here shows is as opposite to the love of Christ as darkness is to light."⁸⁴ He says the Methodist prays to embrace that religion which "he spits his venom so much against under the wickedness of pure superstition, a system of dead, empty forms, or whatever else the pride and malice of his infernal spirit can suggest to him."⁸⁵ He refers to a book by this author, which, he says, "plainly appears to be with no other view than, mount-banklike, to use Christianity as his fool [or jest] for no other end but to gather a crowd about his stage that himself, or some for him, may have a fairer opportunity to pick people's pockets, or at least to vend his trash."⁸⁶ Other expressions are, "vipers," "the religion of these seducers," "pharisaical boasters."⁸⁷ He also stoops to the vulgar insinuation of lewdness, which was so

⁸¹Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. xcvi.

⁸²John Kirkby, *Imposter Detected*, pp. 4 and 17.

⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 23, 47, 50.

common, and which doubtless was intensified by the above-mentioned article in the Gentleman's Magazine. He says, "Again, let this diabolical gratification of their pride remind you of their secret cabals, which they are known so frequently to hold together."⁸⁸ This, of course, referred to their class meetings. On the closing page he says, "In fine, scarce any consideration can be more melancholy than the ravages we see made by these emissaries of Satan among us at present."⁸⁹

Enough for poor Kirkby. Such an unhappy spirit richly deserved all the torture that the presence of the Methodists seemed to have given him. The pity is that in his day there appeared to be so many of his type.

In 1757 the London Magazine printed an article entitled, "A Dozen Reasons Why the Sect of Conjurers, Called Fortune-Tellers, Should Have at Least as Much Liberty to Exercise their Admirable Arts, as Is Now Granted to Methodists, Moravians, and Various Other Sorts of Conjurers." After enumerating the benefits derived from the fortune teller, it says: "Whereas, if these pretenders to conjuration ever do such a good-natured action, it is with great difficulty that the husband can prevent his wife giving the whole, or the greater share of her fortune to them. . . . Whereas, our antagonists have often made poor women lay violent hands on themselves, and but very lately they made a poor woman literally fulfil the Scripture by pulling out one of her eyes, because, we suppose, they told her that she had looked upon a handsome young fellow of her acquaintance with a longing eye."⁹⁰

In December there was a reply to this article by a Methodist, which shows that the article was aimed chiefly at them. It calls upon the writer to point out the woman, who had pulled out an eye, and her advisers.⁹¹ There is no record that this was done.

In 1760 another article appeared in this magazine in which

⁸⁸John Kirkby, *The Imposter Detected*, p. 52.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁹⁰London Magazine, 1757, p. 483.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, p. 589.

were more insinuations of lewdness. The writer says, "I cannot personally and positively assert the reality of dark rooms, naked figures, rattling chains, and typical fires with the mystical pangs of the new birth, though my intelligence came from a right trusty sentinel, a watchman of the night."⁹² Though he confesses his uncertainty, yet it is observed that he rushes into print. The next February another article was printed in this magazine, the indecencies of which cannot be reproduced here.⁹³

For several years, as noted above, the Methodists had been slandered on the public stage.⁹⁴ In 1768 Mr. Isaac Blicherstaff brought out a play entitled *The Hypocrite, A Comedy in Five Acts*.⁹⁵ This was acted in the Theater Royal in Drury Lane, London. It is indeed surprising that respectable people would patronize a public place where such a play was acted. It appears also to have been acted in America, and as late as 1826. The leading character is Dr. Cantwell, meaning one who is good at cant. Those base insinuations of lewdness are herein reproduced. Also the Doctor is trying to rob his friend and patron of his property, and all but succeeds.⁹⁶ This is another of those insinuations which were so widely circulated concerning the Methodists.

The year 1778 brought forth a publication entitled *The Lovefeast, A Poem*. It was dedicated to "The whole communion of fanatics that infest Great Britain and artfully endeavor to shelter themselves under the wing of rational dissension." This is a forty-seven-page production and perhaps is the bitterest of them all. References in footnotes would indicate that the author was a man of considerable scholarship. But certainly he was a man with an uncharitable spirit. His insinuations go farther than merely to lewdness. In it are such statements as follow:

⁹²London Magazine, October, 1760, p. 516.

⁹³Ibid., February, 1761, Letter to Hermas.

⁹⁴Above, pp. 205ff.

⁹⁵Decanver Collection, General Theological Seminary Library.

⁹⁶The Hypocrite, pp. 31 and 63.

There brothers, sisters, and lewd pastors meet
 To truck religion for a jovial treat;
 To drown a year's hypocrisy in wine,
 And carry on imposture's chaste design;
 In solemn farce a jubilee to hold,
 And cast new saints in Reynard's perfect mold.⁹⁷

Moreover, the author makes the following insinuations, and so strongly as almost to make them a declaration of fact. He says:

There the New Adam tries the old one's Fort,
 And Children of the Light in Darkness sport:⁹⁸
 But chiefly when their Midnight-Feasts displays,
 Like Aretino,⁹⁹ Vice a thousand Ways;
 When hymning Saints, like Bacchanalians, join
 To praise the Lord with Zeal inflamed by Wine;
 When preaching Lubbers, tempt the Virgin's lip
 From medicated Chalice to sip.¹⁰⁰
 Hot with drugged Philters mixed by holy Hands,
 Dissention then unites in closest Bands.
 Together wanton Pairs promiscuous run,
 Brother with Sister, Mother with a son;
 Fathers, perhaps, with yielding Daughters meet,
 And converts find their Pastor's Doctrine sweet;
 Pure Souls are fired by Love's divinest spark,
 And Paradise is opened in the dark.¹⁰¹

Almost every page of this "poem" contains some epithet, and breathes out the spirit of hate. Wisely the author conceals his identity.

It has been said that toward the close of Wesley's life there was a change in the attitude toward him. That is true; still, he with the other Methodists had plenty to try the mettle of

⁹⁷The Lovefeast, p. 13.

NOTE—The following are footnotes to the above "poem," as arranged by its author:

⁹⁸"Candles are blown out, or, perhaps, burn out, at these long nightly solemnities.—'Put out the light—and then';" (The Lovefeast, p. 27.)

⁹⁹"A painter of indecent attitudes;" (The Lovefeast, p. 28.)

¹⁰⁰"This insinuation may seem hardly credible, but the author can prove the truth of it from a former member of this distractedly fanatic body. He does not say that this practice is general, but that he knows it has been practiced." (The Lovefeast, p. 28.)

¹⁰¹The Lovefeast, pp. 27ff.

which they were made. When the above "poem" was published he was an old man seventy-five years of age. But age did not save him, nor his followers. In 1789, two years before his death, a pamphlet was published entitled "Methodists Unmasked; or a Letter to an Old Gentleman, who Had Amply Imbided the Very Essence of Hypocrisy, BEING A REPLY TO Letters Addressed to a Young Gentleman, Who Had Early Imbided the Principles of Infidelity."¹⁰² The bulk of the pamphlet is of little importance. The following, however, is a postscript which is of some interest:

POSTSCRIPT

A RECIPE TO MAKE A METHODIST

TAKE of the herbs of hypocrisy and the radix of spiritual pride each two handfuls; two ounces of ambition, vainglory, and impudence; boil them over the fire of sedition till the ingredients swim on the top; then add six ounces of sugar of deceit, one quart of dissembling tears, and put the whole into the bottle of envy, stopping it fast with the cork of malice. When these ingredients are settled make them into pills. Take one night and morning with the tongue of slander: then go into society house to hear nonsense and stupidity by way of gentle exercise; fall into pretended fits; go home; cant; sing hymns, and pray till you are heard all round the neighborhood; backbite your best friends; cheat all you are acquainted with; and, in short, under the mask of holiness commit every other act that an honest man would be ashamed of.

Thus for half a century and more this controversy dragged on. Doubtless these attacks hindered progress, and contributed largely toward stirring up the masses to the violence, which so often endangered the property and the lives of the Methodists, and which sometimes seemed to threaten the very existence of the movement. But undismayed even by such opposition, the Methodist leaders pressed on, facing boldly their accusers, denying the false reports, endeavoring so far as possible to explain their doctrines and motives, and patiently striving to wear out prejudice and to overcome evil reports by good works and by exemplary lives.

¹⁰²Tyerman Collection of Pamphlets, vol. lxxviii.

CHAPTER XIII

PERSECUTION CHECKED

WHILE there was much persecution during the entire life of Wesley, as has been said, yet in his later years it greatly declined. A number of circumstances contributed to this result, each doubtless having had an important influence in checking the outrages. It is not fair to say that any one cause alone produced these changes. However, the direct outcome of legal prosecutions is always apparent. But while this influence was more perceptible, yet other influences were working toward the same end, and certainly contributed no small weight toward producing quiet.

Fortunately for the Methodists, the reigning monarchs afforded them protection. Had it been otherwise, bitter as was the feeling against them, and violent as was the persecution, it seems not improbable that the movement would have been crushed completely, or at any rate greatly restricted. There were those who attempted to kill the leaders, and there were others who wished to send them for soldiers. Either means certainly would have crushed the movement in England, at least for the time. But the sovereigns George II and George III were opposed to persecution for conscience' sake. All accounts agree with Messrs. Coke and Moore, who say: "We are happy that from authentic information we can inform the public that his late Majesty on a representation made to him of the persecutions suffered by the societies at this time, declared that 'No man in his dominions should be persecuted on the account of religion while he sat on the throne.'" ¹ Moreover, George III acted upon the same principle. ²

¹Coke and Moore, *Life of John Wesley*, p. 197; see also John Hampson, *Memoirs of John Wesley*, pp. 30ff; *Life of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. i, p. 67; George Whitefield, *Works*, vol. i, pp. 266ff., Letter No. 286.

²Henry Moore, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 2.

During his entire life Wesley found this policy of the rulers a strong support. Often the magistrates and the inferior courts would refuse warrants; or, if action were brought, would clear the rioters. At Cork, these courts not only cleared the persecutors, but brought recommendations against the Methodist ministers, Charles Wesley included.³ Also, Methodists were pressed, and sometimes condemned for soldiers by these courts. But it was not so in the superior tribunals. The author of the *Life of the Countess of Huntingdon* says, "The superior courts were a sure refuge where no scanty justice, but liberal countenance was afforded to the new species of dissenters."⁴ Moreover, the matter of quelling "riotous mobs, even when the magistrates will not do their duty," was discussed at the Conference in 1749, and it was answered: "There is one, and only one way—move the King's Bench for information against them. This is a way which has never failed us yet."⁵ However, as Mr. Southey observes, "The offenders were not rigorously pursued; they

NOTE—Mr. Moore repeats the following, which was related to him by John Wesley. "One of the original society of Methodists at Oxford, on the departure of its founders from the university, after seeking for others like-minded, at length joined the Society of Quakers and settled at Kew. Being a man of considerable property, and of exemplary behavior, he was much respected, and favored with free permission to walk in the royal gardens. Here he frequently met the King, who conversed freely with him, and with much apparent satisfaction. Upon one of those occasions, his Majesty, knowing that he had been at Oxford, inquired if he knew the Messrs. Wesley, adding, 'They make a great noise in the nation.' The gentleman replied, 'I know them well, King George; and thou mayest be assured, that thou hast not two better men in thy dominions, nor men that love thee better, than John and Charles Wesley.' He then proceeded to give some account of their principles and conduct, with which the King seemed much pleased." (Moore, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, pp. 2ff.)

It is also worthy of note that the Countess of Huntingdon had an interview of upward of an hour with George III and the Queen, when they talked of a great variety of subjects. At this time the King expressed his high appreciation of her Ladyship, and of her work. (*Life of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. ii, pp. 281ff.)

³Above, p. 126.

⁴*Life of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. i, p. 70.

⁵Minutes of the Conference, 1749, printed in 1812.

generally submitted before the trial, and it sufficed to make them understand that the peace might not be broken with impunity.”⁶

As has been observed, in 1740 there were disturbances at Bristol. This occurred at the time of the Quarter-sessions. It was quickly and permanently checked by the ring leaders having been taken into court and severely reprimanded.⁷ At London “Sir John Ganson, the chairman of the Middlesex justices, called upon Wesley and informed him ‘that he had no need to suffer these riotous mobs to molest him,’ adding, ‘Sir, I and the other Middlesex magistrates have orders from above to do you justice whenever you apply to us.’ A short time after he did apply. Justice was done, though not with rigor, and from that period the society had peace in London.”⁸

In the vicinity of Wednesbury, Staffordshire, even the enemies of the Methodists came to see the necessity of quelling the increasing tumults. “The mob turned upon their employers, and threatened, unless they gave them money, to serve them as they had done the Methodists. And, if they saw a stranger, whose appearance did not please them, they immediately attacked him.”⁹ Shortly after this a grave man was riding through Wednesbury when “the mob swore he was a preacher, pulled him off his horse, dragged him to a coal pit and were hardly restrained from throwing him in.” But the Quaker, for such he proved to be, indicted the leader at the Assizes, where the verdict was given against them. From that time the tumults ceased.¹⁰

During the rioting at Hampton, Whitefield wrote a letter to one whom the mob called captain, “desiring him to inform his associates ‘that if they would acknowledge their fault, pay for curing a boy’s arm, which was broken the night I was there, and mend the windows of Mr. Adams’ house, we would readily

⁶Southey, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 50.

⁷Henry Moore, *Life of John Wesley*, vol. ii, p. 2.

⁸*Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 2; J. Crowther, *Methodist Manual*, p. 11.

⁹J. Crowther, *Methodist Manual*, p. 11; John Wesley, *Works*, *History of Methodist People*, sec. 25.

¹⁰John Wesley, *Works*, *History of Methodist People*, sec. 25.

pass all by; but if they persisted in their resolutions to riot we thought it our duty to prevent their doing, and others receiving further damage, by moving for an information against them in the King's Bench.' I also sent a copy of this letter to a minister of the town, and to a justice of the peace, with a letter to each from myself; but all in vain. The rioters sent me a most insolent answer, wrote me word, 'They were in high spirits, and were resolved there should be no more preaching in Hampton.'" The Methodists then moved the King's Bench for the arrest of five of the leaders. The case was postponed at the first term of court, and it was reported that it was to be decided against the Methodists, right or wrong.¹¹ However, at the next term of court it was tried, and decided against the rioters, finding them all guilty. Whitefield wrote, "I hear they are hugely alarmed, but they do not know that we intend to let them see what we can do, and then to forgive them."¹² He does not state the final penalty. Relative to another incident, he assures Lady Huntingdon "that the Welsh justices have ordered the twenty pounds, exacted of the Methodists by Sir W——, to be returned."¹³

The Gentleman's Magazine related that "Edward Frost was this day committed to Newgate prison by a justice for being concerned with many others in a riot, and threatening to burn down the house of Samuel Cole at Norwood, near London."¹⁴ There was a meeting of Methodists at the house. And Wesley says: "I preached at Clayworth, where a year ago the mob carried all before them. But an honest justice quelled them at once, so that they are now glad to be quiet, and mind their own business."¹⁵ And again at Rangdale he preached, he says, "where I expected a disturbance, but found none. The light punishment inflicted on the late rioters, though their expense was not great, as they

¹¹George Whitefield, Account of Gloucester Trial, Works, vol. iv, p. 104.

¹²George Whitefield, Works, vol. ii, p. 58, Letter No. 550.

¹³Ibid., vol. ii, p. 225, Letter No. 728.

¹⁴Gentleman's Magazine, 1757, p. 382.

¹⁵John Wesley, Journal, April 19, 1752.

submitted before the trial, has secured peace ever since. Such a mercy it is to execute the penalty of the law on those who will not regard its precepts! So many inconveniences to the innocent does it prevent, and so much sin in the guilty."¹⁶ From this time it seems that a number of magistrates began to act, following the example of the King's Bench. It was thus at Scotter, a town near Epworth. "An upright magistrate took the cause in hand, and so managed both the rioters and him, who set them at work, that they have been quiet as lambs ever since."¹⁷

Wesley says: "I rode to Faversham. Here I was quickly informed that the mob and the magistrates had agreed together to drive Methodism, so called, out of the town. After preaching I told them what we had been constrained to do by the magistrate at Rolvenden, who, perhaps, would have been richer by some hundreds of pounds, had he never meddled with the Methodists, concluding, 'Since we have both God and the law on our side, if we can have peace by fair means, we had much rather, we would be exceedingly glad; but, if not, we will have peace.'"¹⁸

Wesley relates the circumstance at Atallbridge, which, he says, was "long the seat of war by a senseless, insolent mob, encouraged by their betters, so called, to outrage their quiet neighbors. . . . But no magistrate, though they applied to several, would show them either mercy or justice. At length they wrote to me. I ordered a lawyer to write to the rioters: he did so, but they set him at naught. We then moved the Court of King's Bench. By various artifices they got the trial put off from one time of the Assizes to another for eighteen months. But it fell so much heavier on themselves, when they were found guilty. And from that time, finding there is law for the Methodists, they have suffered them to be at peace."¹⁹ Thomas Mitchell voiced the same sentiment. He says, "As to the lions at Wrangle, an appeal to the Court of King's Bench made both them and the

¹⁶John Wesley, *Journal*, April 20, 1752.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, April 3, 1764.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, January 5, 1766.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, August 30, 1766.

minister quiet as lambs.”²⁰ These are a few of the many instances in which the courts brought the rioters to punishment for their crimes, thus exerting a powerful influence toward checking the lamentable outrages which had so frequently been committed.

We now have to deal with the untimely and unseemly deaths of persecutors. Wesley relates the case of a minister at Bristol, who was accustomed to preach against the Methodists in nearly every sermon, and who “alleged many grievous things against them, but without all color of truth.”²¹ At his last effort of this kind, this minister had just named his text, when he was seized with a peculiar illness, was borne unconscious from the pulpit, and died the next Sunday.

At Inniscorthy, Ireland, a wretched clergyman preached against the Methodists, and encouraged the mob in their outrages. He had preached against them on one occasion, and “after he had painted them as black as devils, he added, ‘I have not time to finish now; next Sunday I will give you the rest.’ But the next morning he was struck in a strange manner. . . . Not long after . . . he went to his account.”²² At Waterford, a Catholic priest and a wealthy merchant had stood in the window of the home of the latter and encouraged the mob to disturb Wesley. The next Sunday the priest fell dead at the altar.²³

Frequent mention is made of the fearful deaths of persecutors. At North-Moulton the captain of the mob cut his throat. He lived long enough to ask pardon of the people whom he had injured.²⁴ At Darlaston, where persecution had been so violent, the fiercest of the persecutors were “called away by a train of amazing strokes.” At Thorpe many of the opponents were “snatched away in an hour, when they looked not for it.” A

²⁰See above, p. 103; Jackson's Lives, vol. i, p. 250.

²¹John Wesley, Journal, August 24, 1743.

²²Ibid., June 15, 1769.

²³Crookshank, History of Methodism in Ireland, vol. i, p. 273; Charles Wesley, Journal, September 24, 1748.

²⁴Charles Wesley, Journal, vol. ii, p. 221.

woman had often sworn that "she would wash her hands in the heart's blood of the next preacher that came, but before the next preacher came she was carried to her long home."²⁵

At Devizes very few of the violent lived out half their days; "many were snatched away in an hour, when they looked not for it."²⁶ At Sidare many bitter persecutors "vanished away like smoke, several of them, indeed, came to a fearful end, and their neighbors took warning from them."²⁷

The end of Beau Nash, who confronted Wesley at Bath, is recorded. "He dreaded the approach of death more than the generality of mankind, and sought refuge in some fancied devotion while it threatened him. Though a complete libertine in practice, none trembled more than he did. To embitter his hopes, he found himself at last abandoned by the great, . . . and was obliged to fly for protection to those of humbler station. . . . The corporation of Bath allowed him a scanty pittance, which saved this miserable trifler from starvation in his last days."²⁸

The end of Butler, the leader of the rioters at Cork, should be noticed. From Cork he went to Waterford "and raised disturbances in that city. But happening to quarrel with some, who were as ready for blood as himself, he lost his right arm in the fray." Being thus disabled he "dragged out the remainder of his life in unpietied misery."²⁹ He fled to Dublin where "the Methodists supported him, or he might have famished."³⁰

As mentioned above, the Methodists wore out opposition. At neither Saint Ives nor Wednesbury were the Methodists successful in their appeals to the courts. Yet at Wednesbury, since May, 1745, and at Saint Ives ever after June, 1747, there was perfect peace. John Wesley makes numerous mention of visiting both these places, and sometimes preaching to nearly the

²⁵John Wesley, *Journal*, April 2, 1751.

²⁶*Ibid.*, September 18, 1772.

²⁷*Ibid.*, May 30, 1787.

²⁸*Life of Countess of Huntingdon*, vol. i, p. 445, note.

²⁹William Smith, *History of Wesleyan Methodism in Ireland*, p. 34.

³⁰*Methodist Magazine*, 1812, p. 45.

whole town, high and low, rich and poor, sometimes to congregations of eight or ten thousand.³¹ Especially is this true of Saint Ives, where during the rest of his life Wesley was always received by a great multitude, and always with the greatest courtesy.

In 1744 Wesley writes, "This day Mr. Williams wrote a solemn retraction of the gross slanders he had been propagating for several months concerning my brother and me."³² At Wakefield Wesley was surprised to find himself preaching in the church, while a few years ago an honest man did not dare to let him preach in his yard, lest the mob should pull down his house.³³ At Dudley, in 1761, he found all as quiet as at London. He says, "The scene is changed since the dirt and stones of this town were flying about me on every side."³⁴ And at Walsal, that place of bitterest opposition, he preached in 1764, "and there was no opposer, not a trifler to be seen."³⁵ At another place a drunkard attempted to lay hold upon the preacher, but the hearers took him in charge so roughly that Wesley entreated for the disturber in order to save him from injury.³⁶ At Barnard Castle Wesley questions: "Are these the people that, a few years ago, were like roaring lions? They were now quiet as lambs; nor could several showers drive them away till I concluded."³⁷ He was at Congleton, and remarks: "What a change in this town! The bitter enmity of the townsfolks to the Methodists is clean forgotten; so has the steady behavior of the little flock turned the hearts of the opposers."³⁸ Of Colne, he says, "I scarcely ever saw a congregation wherein men, women, and children stood in such a posture; and this in the town wherein thirty

³¹ John Wesley, *Journal*, March 31, 1751; August 25, 1780.

³² *Ibid.*, December 2, 1744.

³³ *Ibid.*, April 12, 1752.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, March 17, 1761.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, March 26, 1864.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, July 19, 1743.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, June 10, 1761.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, April 30, 1774.

years ago no Methodist could show his head.”³⁹ At Bath “the scene is changed again; here we have the rich and honorable in abundance; and yet abundance of them came even in a stormy night, and seemed as attentive as colliers.”⁴⁰

In 1765 Wesley repeated his visit to Ireland. Concerning his visit to Dublin he says he preached “to such a congregation as I never saw in Dublin before, and everyone was as quiet as if we had been in the new square at Bristol. What a change since Mr. Whitefield, a few years ago, attempted to preach near this place!”⁴¹ He also was at Cork. Of this place he says: “Many of the chief of the city were of the audience, clergy as well as laity. And all but two or three were not only quiet, but serious, and deeply attentive. What a change! Formerly we could not walk through the street but at the peril of our lives.”⁴²

References to this great change are very numerous. Places where there had never been any court proceedings, and places where an appeal to the courts had failed, had changed. The Methodists had been winning their way into the confidence of the masses. Prejudice was breaking down before them, consequently, to a large degree, the desire to persecute was dying out.

³⁹John Wesley, Journal, April 30, 1776.

⁴⁰Ibid., September 19, 1789.

⁴¹Ibid., July 21, 1765.

⁴²Ibid., June 23, 1765.

CHAPTER XIV

SUMMARY—AN ESTIMATE

OF the real extent of the struggle of the early Methodists against persecution it seems that now we can never fully know. It is probable that a great deal of the minor disturbances, and even of violence, was not recorded. Moreover, it is also probable that considerable that was recorded is now lost. This is more especially true of the abuse and vilification that was heaped upon them in pamphlets, during the controversy, which lasted till after Wesley's death. Mr. Decanver accuses the Methodists of having bought up and suppressed these publications,¹ while Mr. Green believes that "many are now probably destroyed . . . or are hidden away in holes and corners from which it is impossible, if it were desirable, to dislodge them."²

As for violence, it is known that John Wesley did not record some instances where he was treated with shameful cruelty. Also when he was injured he minimized his own sufferings. Being extremely desirous of subduing or controlling the rioters, he naturally would exert every mental energy toward that end. Therefore he would have neither time nor inclination to think of his own injuries.

The same facts would very likely be true of his lay helpers. They would be expected to follow his example and to learn of him. Therefore they too would be mentally preoccupied in an effort to quell the disturbance or to soften the rioters. In some cases this is known to be true. They too were inclined to minimize their own sufferings. They tell of being unconscious, of blood gushing out, etc., but they say little of feeling pain. More-

¹H. C. Decanver, *Catalogue of Works in Refutation of Methodism*, p. 5.

²Richard Green, *Anti-Methodist Publications*, Preface, p. 6.

over, their biographies were frequently written by themselves, and often say little, and sometimes nothing at all of persecution. How much of their sufferings they have omitted to tell can never be known.

At present the chief sources of information on this subject are the Journals, and works of the three great leaders of the movement, the biographies and autobiographies of the preachers, the local histories of Methodism, and, of course, certain minor sources. Were it not for these works very little would now be known of what the Methodists endured for conscience' sake.

Just what distinction there was between opposition and persecution is hard to tell. There are plenty of statements to the effect that this "new sect was everywhere spoken against." Opposition was universal. Wherever the Methodists went they were met with the frowns and scowls of disapproval. Only a very small minority gave them welcome, and these were chiefly their own adherents and converts. A very few, who could not be called followers, welcomed them, but this company was so small numerically as scarcely to be worthy of consideration. Except perhaps in the case of Whitefield, whose wonderful oratory, in spite of opposition, won for him considerable popularity, it is quite true that the originators of Methodism faced a world of opposers.

The nature of this opposition was severe. As has been shown, the Methodists were accused of the grossest crimes, some of which were high treason. All kinds of false reports were circulated. Each locality seemed to add something new to the list of calumnies. So the Methodists were not only everywhere spoken against, but they were also everywhere falsely accused. These reports the preachers were compelled to face, which they did with an undaunted courage. Sometimes they refuted them; sometimes they merely denied them and passed on, and at other times they entirely ignored them. Time was too precious. Had they attempted to run down all false reports, it is quite probable that they would have accomplished little else. For, when one lost weight, another seemed immediately to spring up to take its place.

Violence in its open and flagrant form was not everywhere. In certain places—for example, London and Bristol—this was quickly checked by the civil authorities. Yet even in these cities there were some disturbances, but they were rare and comparatively mild. They seem to have been just an outburst or overflow of the spirit of persecution that prevailed in other neighborhoods. Beyond a doubt, almost everywhere they went, if there was not open violence, there were both calumnies and plenty of petty annoyances. They were reviled. While the preachers were preaching horns were blown, bells were rung, dogs were brought up to disturb, cocks were set to fighting, cattle were driven through the audiences, mud and dirt were thrown, and also other missiles were hurled at the speaker. These not only annoyed, but often bruised or brought blood. The preachers often preached with the blood trickling down their faces, caused by these injuries. This was much more true of the lay preachers than of Whitefield and the Wesleys.

Mobs were surprisingly common. It is impossible to tell how often they occurred, but for several years immediately after lay helpers were introduced it is not improbable that there were riots of more or less consequence in some part or other of the three kingdoms every two or three weeks, perhaps oftener. It is reasonable to suppose that minor disturbances were passed unnoticed and that only those mobs of larger proportions were mentioned, especially as there were riots so very destructive in character.³

Some of these riots were easily quelled. It was always the practice of the preachers, when a mob assembled, to look it straight in the face. They often addressed the men personally, perhaps preaching to the rioters, or perhaps using other arguments suitable to the occasion. Frequently these direct addresses would quiet the disturbers. At other times the preacher would address the leader, or would go down and take him by the hand and endeavor to reason with him. John Wesley very frequently

³George Whitefield, Works, vol. iv, p. 102, Brief Account of Trial at Gloucester, p. 7.

did this. Often he would go from man to man, talking and reasoning with them, and by this means on many occasions he turned the bitterest enemies into friends. Frequently these were leaders of the mob. Sometimes these leaders were pugilists, in which case they rendered him material aid. For they would not hesitate to knock down any man or woman who might attempt to injure the man who had won their friendship. From assailants they would become protectors, and would fight as vigorously for their charge as they had against him. This, however, seldom was necessary, for when a pugilist lifted up his arm in defense of the despised Methodist preacher the others almost invariably seemed suddenly to lose their antipathy. The vigor and the anger of the rabble seemed to depend to a remarkable degree upon the likelihood of opposition, and especially whether that opposition was strong enough to hurt. They were bold as lions when there was nothing to fear, but when there was a strong arm to face their courage suddenly subsided.

Then often the rabble would fall out among themselves, and the opposition would turn into a free-for-all fight. This happened with surprising frequency, yet not so surprising, after all, when it is recalled that the masses had nothing especially against the Methodists. The great majority of men at that time were too ignorant and too base to know or to care what was preached. Besides very few of them ever went to church. They seemed to care very little for it. Ignorant men live largely in their emotions. So these men wanted excitement, and a fight was very much to their liking. The Methodist preachers were everywhere spoken against, thus their unpopularity made it seem utterly impossible for them to strike back. Besides it was their practice not to resist violence. In their cases, therefore, it was very similar to baiting a bull, a popular and cruel sport practiced at that time. Indeed, several times the mob planned to "bait the parson."

Though many of the preachers were laymen, yet there was a dignity connected with their office which in a measure protected them. Also by their exceptional experience they be-

came more skillful than their hearers in handling the mobs or in escaping from them. But these mobs were by no means always or easily quelled. On the contrary, at one time or another, practically all of the earlier preachers suffered terribly at the hands of angry rioters. This included Whitefield and both of the Wesleys. But the lay preachers suffered most severely, for they were irregular, and less to be tolerated than the educated and ordained leaders. Frequently one was knocked down and beaten with sticks, dragged along the street, his clothes torn off, or covered with filth or with paint. They were thrown into pools of water; once this was done when the victim was unconscious from the blows which he had received; once a stick was thrust into the mouth of an unconscious sufferer. Some suffered for months or years from their injuries, or never completely recovered; a few afterwards died from the effect of them; several were left for dead, and at least one suffered immediate martyrdom. Whitefield twice narrowly escaped being killed; Charles Wesley frequently had severe encounters with the mobs, and John Wesley, on several occasions, considered his life to be valued by minutes. Yet these were the most successful of all in subduing, or escaping the fury of the angry rabble.

Wherever they went the preachers were sure to meet an expectant audience, and very frequently a multitude of hearers. They were usually denounced in bitter terms, and the people warned against hearing them, but the masses seemed not to have had a high regard for their ministers. What bond of union there was on the part of the people for the clergy seems to have been chiefly that of respect for a man of higher social standing than themselves, and of obedience to one who possessed considerable political authority.⁴ Moreover, the Methodists were "everywhere spoken against," which indicates that they were everywhere known. And after hearing the numerous stories of the utter depravity and inhumanity of these men, when a Methodist preacher was announced it was only natural that every person

⁴NOTE—Often the minister was also a magistrate or a justice.

of mature age in the entire community would be curious to get a look at the man, who they had been told was a monster. Incited by these stories, it is very probable that individuals went to the preaching place with strange or mingled feelings. Doubtless some were ready to rend the preacher asunder, while others were awed with expectation. The preachers often spoke of the strangeness of the crowd. Moreover, this peculiar emotional sensation on the part of the hearers would be intensified upon seeing the man. They had come to see some sort of a monster; they usually saw a well-looking, clean, good and kindly face, and sometimes a very handsome man, for some of the early preachers were such. Naturally, under these conditions, the people stood amazed. In their curiosity some asked, "What kind of a man is this?" Then, as the preacher proceeded, if he were not mobbed, and could proceed, these feelings would begin to take form in some estimate of the man. Some would conclude that surely this was the wolf in sheep's clothing, of which they had been told, while others would be persuaded that these reports were false, and that, after all, these were good men who spoke the oracles of God. And from numerous statements of the preachers this is just what happened many times. Occasionally there was a stupid, indifferent wonderment, but this was by no means the rule. Usually the reaction upon the people was vivid, and sometimes it was intensely so. The opposition would be ready to tear the preachers in pieces, while the convinced would shed tears of penitence and sympathy. The sympathetic listeners were very likely to become Methodists. Then the rage of the angered multitude would be turned against these converted neighbors.

Wherever the preacher suffered, the members of the society were also objects of attack.⁵ And the distress at least of some of the people was usually as great or greater than that of the

⁵NOTE—There were but few exceptions, as has been said, where the magistrates interfered. But it was necessary for the Methodists who enjoyed repose to send relief to their brethren, who had been despoiled. At times this was quite a drain upon the societies, especially as so many of the Methodists were poor.

preacher. If missiles were thrown at the preacher, they were thrown among the congregation, or into the house where the preacher was stopping. The people were subject to annoyances while at the meetings, but it seems that their chief suffering was when they left the meeting to go to their homes, or to escape the mob. At these times they were subjected to insults and abuse. They were sometimes knocked down, or pelted with dirt, stones, or whatever came to hand, or beaten with sticks. In time of persecution the mob thought that it mattered little what they did to them, for it seemed to the rabble that there was no law for the Methodists.

In the more violent outbreaks the people suffered terribly. Many had all the windows of their houses broken. So prevalent was this in certain places that men riding through the town some time afterward could tell the homes of the Methodists by the condition of the windows. Some were boarded up; others were stopped up in one way or another, and all Methodist homes bore marks of the general destruction. A few had their goods utterly destroyed or stolen, and were left penniless in the world. There is record of a number of shopkeepers who had their goods destroyed so completely as to drive them out of business. Several had their goods destroyed and their homes partially wrecked, while one or two had their houses pulled down. Several meeting-houses were demolished. A great many, perhaps several thousand Methodists, suffered more or less bodily injury. A few of these were injured for life, some were weeks or months recovering from their wounds, while several were killed, or died of their injuries.

It must be added that the women seem to have been the greatest sufferers. When violence was severe it is frequently said that the rabble began by beating a woman. Her lot was especially hard. Her sex did not save her in the general disturbance, but, rather, at times she seems to have been the chief object of attack. Even if a widow with children, she was not spared. She sometimes found her goods destroyed and herself and children left entirely without means of support. Women

were frequently injured, sometimes severely, and while going to and from the meetings they were rather commonly subjected to the grossest insults. But they persevered. Many times they succeeded in shaming their assailants, and always resisted them with their utmost strength. Notwithstanding their hard lot, women contributed much toward the success of the movement.

The nature of the bitterest persecution is especially revolting. The opposers seemed to search the country for the dirtiest, most loathsome substances on which they could lay their hands to throw at the people and especially at the preachers. Filth from the stables, dead animals, eggshells filled with blood and stopped with pitch, were favorite missiles. When these were lacking, mud, potatoes, turnips, cabbage stocks, stones—in fact, anything that came to hand were favorable substitutes.

The bodily exposures to which both men and women were subjected, and other outrages upon the women were sometimes most shameful and criminal. However, of this unwelcome subject it is not necessary to go into detail here, as facts have been given elsewhere. Fortunately, this type of violence seems to have been practiced in comparatively few places. In those days none but a man or woman who was willing to endure hardness and suffering could become a Methodist. Those with even moderate courage or devotion were quite likely to become discouraged and to turn back to what seemed an easier way of life.

Unfortunately, the chief blame for the persecution of the early Methodists, and for the horrible outrages that were committed against them, must be laid to the charge of the clergy of the Church of England. Though much less rigid as a churchman than his brother, John Wesley is decidedly more guarded and conservative than Charles in his statements relating to the clergy as instigators of trouble. Yet John Wesley makes some very clear and definite declarations concerning them in this matter. But Charles, the staunch churchman, is frank and free, and it is from him chiefly that the extent of the opposition of the clergy is known. Heavy responsibility is laid upon the bishops. When the Wesleys and Whitefield were first being

excluded from the pulpits of England a number of ministers told them that personally they had no objection to lending their pulpits, but they dared not, lest they should offend the bishop. Later this fear on the part of the pastors became more pronounced. Frequently the ministers frankly admitted that they dared not to permit Methodist preaching from their pulpits. Some replied that they dared not do it for many pounds of money.

At Wednesbury the minister was first pleased with the preachers, but he had heard a vehement visitation charge from his bishop. Also unwise words had been uttered by some local preachers, and the fiercest riots were incited. There were but few places where these unwise words were uttered. The Methodists soon learned the disastrous consequences of this, and there is no more record of it. But there are numerous references to visitation charges by the bishops, which caused intensified opposition. It is also to be remembered that one of the worst outrages against the Methodists was at Exeter, the home of Bishop Lavington.⁶ He may not have been responsible for the riot, but there is no mention of his making any efforts to check it. Indeed, during the earlier years at least, there is little record of any bishop checking persecution. There is a statement, however, concerning one bishop that he was strongly opposed to it.⁷

The magistrates also were largely responsible. It was their duty to preserve order. Yet in all cases where there was persecution they neglected this duty. For, when a magistrate did enforce the law, persecution soon ceased. Sometimes, however, they did more than to neglect duty; they actively encouraged the mob. In other cases when application was made to them for warrants they refused and accused the Methodists of creating riots. Once they threw out the complaint against the rioters and brought in a warrant against the Methodists.

Against the opposition there were always resisting forces. From the very first there were some magistrates that would act,

⁶Above, pp. 64 and 101.

⁷Above, p. 166.

and in these localities there was quiet. Then the King's Cabinet sent word to Wesley that the higher courts would do him justice against the rioters. Henceforth the Methodists usually found these higher courts effective. But in case they failed, the King's Bench never did. There was an obstacle here, however, in the heavy costs, for most of the Methodists were poor. Yet, when necessity compelled, they found the means to appeal to this court and receive justice. Even magistrates found themselves in trouble at the King's Bench for their meddling with the Methodists. King George II and III both were opposed to persecution for conscience' sake, and were resolved that while they sat upon the throne, there should be none, if they could prevent it.

Then there was the undaunted courage of the Methodists. Most men will weary of their own cruelties, if they see that it avails nothing. To persecute a Methodist accomplished but little, for usually either he or some one else was soon back again, encouraging a devoted people or preaching to the multitude. Sometimes these preachers deliberately walked into the face of the fiercest rioters. And the mobs simply could not resist. They gave way to a much inferior number, but to vastly superior courage. They actually appear to have feared the courage of these men, and to have been won by it.

Moreover, the rabble was constantly discovering that many of the stories which had been circulated about the Methodists were false. They were loudly accused of supporting the Pretender, but when the Pretender landed in Scotland, and not a Methodist went to his standard, but, rather, labored against him, this report lost its force. One by one other stories would lose weight. In fact, the people gradually came to know the Methodists, and ceased to fear them.

Another restraining influence was the appearance of the preacher and his sincerity. They all abstained from tobacco, alcohol, and from all forms of debauchery and vice, which made them clear-skinned, good-looking, or even handsome, men, when compared with the vice-marked visage of the masses of their time. A good face, if it is clearly seen, always appeals, even to

the rabble. John Wesley used to go out to the mob without a hat purposely that they might see the outline of his face more distinctly. Moreover, sincerity always makes a similar appeal. The people saw that these preachers and people were willing to suffer for what they believed, and that they would deprive themselves in order to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked. This was telling, as righteousness always tells, except with studied viciousness; and in the later years of Wesley's life very little disturbance came from the poorer classes, but he frequently mentions annoyances from "those by the courtesy of England called gentlemen."

It should be added that these preachers toiled hard. It was not an easy matter to ride on horseback ten, twenty, forty, sixty, or more miles a day, besides preaching two, three, or four times. Even ignorant men could see that this was labor. If the preacher were a layman, it was not easy to toil all day at manual labor, then walk several miles at night, and preach, and take still longer journeys on Sundays. Even ignorant men could see that this was hard. Slowly they came to realize that it was not for selfish ends, as had been reported, but for the welfare of mankind that these men toiled. Often they were weary, but still pressed on. Wherever they went they not only preached but distributed benevolences to the poor, denounced oppression, and rebuked wrong. Thus the results of their work convinced those who had been opposers, of the sincerity of the Methodists. Unrequited and disinterested toil, accompanied with tact and kindness, is always, and was then, a powerful factor in breaking down opposition.

Thus Methodism won its way and established itself in the British Isles. Its leaders and its people profoundly believed in the mission of the movement. It was an attempt to reestablish primitive Christianity upon the earth. Its doctrines were such as its leaders believed were taught by the primitive church, and they invariably endeavored to enforce the strict moral life and the devout piety of the early Christians. Consequently, they forged their way forward through opposition and suffering

toward the goal. They appear as a people that had deliberately and calmly resolved to perform what they verily believed to be their duty, even if it cost them their lives. With them duty was first; life was second. Thus bad men were transformed, evil habits were broken, benevolent enterprises were inaugurated, education stimulated, and a great reforming movement began to sweep over the Anglo-Saxon world. England was aroused out of the lethargy, ignorance, and vice into which it had sunk, and launched on the voyage of progress and advancement which is a certain consequence of renewed righteousness. Lecky says, "After all that can be said of material and intellectual advantages, it remains true that moral causes lie at the root of the greatness of nations."⁸ Methodism contributed to the growing greatness of England, not only by the intensifying of its moral life, but also by adding to the material and intellectual welfare of mankind. It reformed thousands of men and women, reclaiming multitudes of them from vice, idleness, and sloth, and thus increased the productivity of the people, and also lessened the difficult task of government. Intellectually, it established schools and encouraged study and learning. Wherever the Methodist preacher went he carried pamphlets and books for distribution among the people.⁹ Methodism taught that one must know in order to live properly. These books were read by those who before probably had read little or nothing during their entire lives. Their example stimulated others to emulate them. Thus Methodism contributed to the moral, intellectual, and material development of the British nation.

⁸History of England in 18th Century, vol. ii, p. 2.

⁹John Wesley, Works, Several Conversations between Mr. W. and Others, Question 27, paragraph 7.

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